

"ST. JIM'S FOR EVER!"

A RIPPING LONG COMPLETE
SCHOOL YARN INSIDE!

CONTINUOUS
VARIETY!
YOUR FAVOURITE
STARS—
TOM MERRY & Co
INSIDE!

The GEM

2^d



ST JIM'S FOR EVER!



Jimson major and his minor seem strange creatures when they arrive at the Grammar School, and they cause something of a surprise to Frank Monk & Co.—but that's nothing to what happens when the Grammarians discover who the Jimsons really are!

CHAPTER 1.

The New Boys!

"**B**LESSED if I like this!" growled Frank Monk. He was walking up and down the platform at Rylcombe Station, with his hands in his pockets, and a frown upon his face. His chums, Lane and Carboy, of the Grammar School, were with him, and they were looking equally annoyed.

"Yes, it's rotten, and no mistake!" Carboy agreed.

"Rotten isn't the word," said Lane; "it's beastly! Slinger has done this on purpose, of course. Why couldn't he send a senior to meet the new kids?"

"It would have been much better form."

"Of course it would! He's messed up our cricket practice for the afternoon, sending us here. Come to that, what's the need of meeting new kids at all? Can't they walk from the station alone?"

"They might get into a row with the St. Jim's chaps."

"That's more likely to happen if we're with them than if we're not."

"You're right, Laney. The fact is, Slinger doesn't like the son of his headmaster any too much, and now dad's away he's been a bit heavy on me."

"I jolly well wish Dr. Monk would come back," grunted Carboy.

"Well, I can't say I like the autocratic rule of the Slinger-bird," said Frank. "Still, it won't be for long. What I

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don't like is being sent here like this to meet a parcel of silly new kids."

"How many of them are there?"

"Two—brothers, so I understand—major and minor, named Johnson or Jimson, I think."

"Pair of toads, I expect!" growled Carboy, who was rather unreasonably inclined to visit the responsibility of his spoiled half-holiday upon the new boys. "Fancy picking a half to come to school!"

"I dare say they came when they were sent."

"Well, they'd better mind their p's and q's, that's all. I shan't stand any bosh from them, for one!"

"Don't jump on them before you see them," said Frank, laughing. "After all, it's not their fault. Hallo, there's the train!"

It was steaming into the station. The Grammarian youths looked discontentedly along it as it stopped. Several carriage doors opened. From one of them stepped two youths in dark brown, one of them carrying a bag, and both of them wearing peculiarly large and round spectacles, which gave them an owlish aspect.

Monk looked at them and grinned.

"Great Scott! Are they the new kids?"

"Pretty pair—I don't think!" grunted Carboy.

"Well, they can't help their looks. Let's go and speak to them."

The two new boys stood on the platform, looking round them with a rather bewildered air, as if quite new and strange to the place.

AS NEW BOYS! READ ABOUT THE SENSATION OF THE TERM, BELOW!

By MARTIN CLIFFORD

"Is this Rylcombe, porter?" said the elder of the two, in a squeaky voice.

"Yes, sir," said the porter, touching his cap in anticipation of a tip.

"Is there a Grammar School near here, porter?"

"Yes, sir—Rylcombe Grammar School, sir."

"Very good! Will you—er—carry that bag for me to some vehicle, porter, and I will present you with a gratuity?"

"Yes, sir; thank you, sir!"

"My hat!" said Frank Monk. "What a voice! It matches the chivvy. Let's speak to 'em and get it over. I say, kid!"

The elder youth turned to him, blinking through his glasses.

"Did you address me?" he asked.

"Yes. I did, specs."

"Ah! And why did you address me?"

"We belong to Rylcombe Grammar School."

"Oh, indeed! I am afraid Rylcombe Grammar School isn't much class, Reginald," said the new boy, turning to the younger of the two.

Reginald shook his head, and his glasses nearly fell off.

"Doesn't look like it, does it—to Bertie?"

Frank Monk turned very pink.

"Look here—" he began warmly.

"I am looking at you," said Bertie. "I am glad to meet you. What is your name?"

"Frank Monk."

"Very good! My name is Jimson—Bertie Jimson. And this is Jimson minor, my younger brother. We are new boys."

"You look it! And I don't believe there ever were kids of your cut before," said Monk.

"That is a rather personal remark, Monkey."

"Monk, you ass!"

"Eh?" squeaked Jimson major.

"My name's Monk, you ass!"

"Very well, Monk, you ass!"

"Dummy! My name's Monk—Frank Monk."

"This chap is off his rocker, Reginald. First he says his name is Monkey, and then Monk you ass, and then—"

"Right off it!" said Reginald. "He looks it, too."

Monk & Co. exchanged glances.

"Better wipe up the platform with them as a start," suggested Carboy. "They look as if they're going to give trouble."

"May as well begin here," said Lane.

"I don't know; we were sent to meet them."

"Indeed, it was very kind of you to come and meet us," said Jimson major. "I suppose you cannot help being unpleasant. I have heard that the boys of Rylcombe Grammar School are very noisy and rude, and—"

"You'll hear something else soon," said Monk darkly.

"You'll hear yourself drop on the platform. Look here, you're under my wing at present, so I won't pulverise you. Come along, and I'll show you to the school."

"Thank you! Will you carry my bag and save me the expense of hiring a vehicle?"

"No fear!"

"Really, Monkey—"

"Monk, you silly jossler!"

"Well, Monk, you silly jossler—"

Frank Monk laid a heavy hand on the new boy's shoulder.

"Look here, 'nuff of that! Any more little jokes and I shall wipe up the platform with you. You hear me?"

"I am not deaf, Monkey."

"You will have it, then!" roared the exasperated Monk, peeling off his jacket and slinging it to Carboy to hold.

"Put up your fists!"

"What for?"

"I'm going to give you a licking."

"Impossible! I cannot fight with glasses on."

"Take 'em off, then!"

"If you insist—"

"That's for a start!" said Frank Monk, giving Jimson

major a tap on the nose. "Now, where will you have the next?"

"Here, hold my glasses, Reginald!"

"Certainly, Bertie!"

Jimson major handed his spectacles to Reginald and went for Frank Monk.

Monk met him confidently, but his confidence vanished in a moment. His guard was swept up, and a tap on the nose placed him in a sitting position on the platform before he knew what was happening.

Jimson major replaced his spectacles and blinked down at him.

"I hope I have not hurt you," he squeaked. "I fear my fist came into somewhat violent contact with your nose."

"My hat!"

Frank Monk sat, dazed, staring at the new boy.

From his appearance, his absurd manner of expression, and his squeaky voice, he had taken Jimson major for a spooney of the spooniest sort.

But that tap on the nose had undeceived him. A fellow who could hit out like that could not be regarded as a spooney, by any means.

Frank Monk rose slowly to his feet.

"Go for him!" said Carboy. "That was a fluke, of course."

Monk shook his head.

"You're not going to let him off!" exclaimed Lane in amazement.

"Rats! We didn't come here to fight," said Monk. "I suppose we don't want a stand-up fight on the platform? The gym at the school is a better place for that."

"Well, yes, that's so."

"Let's get off! You're not such a muff as I took you for, Jimson major!"

"Thank you. If my mamma hadn't taught me to be very truthful, I'd make the same remark to you," squeaked the new boy.

Lane and Carboy chuckled, and Frank Monk smiled a sickly smile.

"Oh, come on!" said Monk. "I want to get rid of you, and get back to cricket."

And the juniors left the platform.

CHAPTER 2.

Jimson Major Plays Cricket!

"HALLO!"

"What are they?"

"Where did you pick them up?"

"Look here, Monk, what do you mean by bringing those animals into a decent school?"

Such were the polite remarks of the Grammarian youths as Frank Monk and his chums brought the new boys into the playground at the Grammar School.

The Grammarians gathered round in force, looking curiously at the new boys, and passing the most free-and-easy remarks upon their personal appearance, their manners, and their probable ancestry.

Jimson major and Jimson minor blinked round through their spectacles, quite unmoved. There certainly wasn't any of the nervousness natural to new boys about them. One might have supposed that they were accustomed to school life.

The rude remarks of the Grammarians became a little more personal, the boys trying what they could do to shake the serenity of the newcomers; but that serenity was not to be shaken.

"Where did you dig them up?" exclaimed Gilson in disgust.

"I found 'em on the platform at Rylcombe," said Frank Monk. "Choice specimens, ain't they? Ripe?"

"Yes, rather!"

"Are they for the school museum?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Dear me," said Jimson major, "what a lot of boot-boys are employed in this establishment."

"Er? What?" said Gilson.

"But where are the pupils?" pursued Bertie.

"Pupils!"

"Yes; where are they?"

"Why, you horried ass," exclaimed Hanks, "we're the pupils!"

"Rot!" said Jimson major.

"Rats!" said Jimson minor. "You can't stuff us up! You're not going to make us believe that you're pupils in a respectable school."

The Grammarians looked at one another.

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Passing remarks on new boys was quite natural and proper, but for new boys to take up the same line and pass personal remarks on the old hands, was an innovation, and one the Grammarians did not like.

"Of all the cheek," said Gilson, "I think this takes the biscuit."

Jimson major blinked at Frank Monk.

"Is it straight?" he asked. "Are these the pupils?"

"Of course they are, fathead!"

"Then I am afraid I shall not stay in this school," said the new boy, shaking his head. "My papa and mamma would not like me to stay among these persons. What do you think, Reginald?"

Reginald shook his head in his turn.

"I quite agree with you, Bertie."

"My hat!" said Frank Monk, gasping for breath. "I don't think I've ever seen new kids quite like this before!"

"Off their rockers!" said Carboy.

"For goodness' sake, let's get to the cricket!" said Lane.

"We've brought the animals here, and they can go to their cages by themselves!"

"Cricket!" said Jimson major. "Do you play cricket here?"

"Yes, ass! Look at that field! Doesn't that look like cricket?" bawled Carboy.

Jimson major blinked at the field. That field was the pride of the Grammarians' heart. When the Grammar School was first built, the playing fields had been some distance from the school, but later on, Dr. Monk had acquired a large piece of land closer at hand, and it was laid out as playing fields. There were several games in progress on the ground, but the new boys did not seem impressed.

"Well, can't you see 'em, Specs major?" demanded Lane.

"Yes, I can see 'em," said Jimson major. "But—"

"But what?"

"Do you call that cricket?"

The Grammarians simply gasped. If they prided themselves upon anything more than their football, it was upon their cricket, and the new boy's question took their breath away.

"My word!" said Monk. "What shall we do with 'em'?"

"Jump on 'em!" said Gilson.

"Give 'em the frog's-march!"

"Knock their heads off!"

"Here, hold on!" squeaked Jimson major. "I did not mean to offend anybody. I only asked a civil question. I'm looking for information. Do you call that cricket?"

"Perhaps you could show us some points in cricket?" sneered Hanks.

"Yes; I dare say I could!"

"Then you jolly well shall!" exclaimed Frank Monk, hotly. "Just come over here and handle a bat, and if you don't make a good show, we'll duck you both in the fountain!"

"Hear, hear!"

"We'll give you a chance. But you won't do so much bragging here. I can tell you! If you don't play up like Sutcliffe and Hammond, look out for squalls!"

"But I only asked a civil question."

"Oh, ring off!"

"Yes; but you haven't answered my question yet. Do you—"

"Cheese it!"

"Call that—"

"Shut up!"

"Cricket!" finished the new youth triumphantly.

Monk did not reply. He led the way to the junior side of the cricket ground, and a crowd of excited Grammarians followed. The new boys were in a rather serious fix, there was no doubt about that. By loftily patronising the Grammarians' cricket they had touched the Grammar School youths on the raw, so to speak, and the crowd meant business. Unless the new boys justified their position by first-class cricket, there was no escaping the threatened ducking.

But they did not seem at all nervous. They smiled serenely as they accompanied the crowd to the field. They dumped down their bags outside the scoring-tent, and blinked round the field.

"Now then, will you bat or bowl?" asked Monk sharply.

"Oh, I wish we had Fatty here!" murmured Jimson major. "We'd show 'em some bowling!"

"Eh? What's that?"

"I'll bat, I think!"

"Good! You can take my pads."

"Thanks awfully."

"And pick out a bat to suit you."

"You're too good."

"Not at all!" said Frank Monk grimly. "I'm going to give you a chance. Fair play's a jewel. If you can play THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,316.

cricket, you can jaw about it. If you can't, you'll have to learn not to jaw. I warn you."

"Good! I can play a little."

"You'll have to play more than a little if you want to avoid a ducking."

"Got it, my son, send me a ball!"

"I'm going to. Look out, that's all."

Jimson major selected a bat that suited him, and took up his position at the wicket. Monk went down to bowl.

The Grammarians stood back, and looked with interest.

The new boy did not look as if he were cut out for a cricketer by any means; but appearances were often deceptive.

Jimson major and Jimson minor were, as a matter of fact, Tom Merry and Kerr of St. Jim's respectively. Their masquerading as new boys at the Grammar School was part of a deep-laid plot designed by the juniors of St. Jim's to put the Grammarians in their place.

Tom Merry was the finest junior batsman at St. Jim's, and his disguise made no difference to his skill. He took off his glasses to bat, that was all.

Monk took a little run, and sent the ball down.

Click!

The bat met the round red ball, and it went on its travels. Where it went, the Grammarians did not see. But the smash of a pane of glass in the distance told them. They turned their heads, and stared at the jagged hole in the glass of a distant greenhouse.

"My only hat!" said Carboy. "That was a swipe!"

Jimson major smiled serenely.

"Sorry for the glass," he said. "It will have to be charged in my bill. Any more coming on, Monkey?"

"Chuck me another ball!" shouted Monk.

He took the new ball in hand, and carefully calculated the next delivery. He sent the ball down with the force of a howitzer shell, but he found the batsman quite ready.

Click!

The hit was a boundary—and more than a boundary. The ball had shot into the midst of a game played by a senior team on the next pitch. Hake, the bully of the Grammar School, who was fielding at slip, was seen to give a sudden jump.

Then he twisted round, and glared towards the juniors. The cricket ball—which had caught him in the ribs—fell into the grass.

"Who threw that ball?" he roared.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you young cads!"

"Sorry!" said the new boy. "I batted. I didn't mean it for you, of course."

Hake gritted his teeth.

"You young liar!"

"Rats!"

Hake could hardly believe his ears for a moment. That a new junior would dare to say "rats!" to him was scarcely credible.

He glared at Jimson major, and then ran towards him. His comrades called him to come back and field, but he never heeded them. Straight towards the new boy he ran, with clenched fists and gleaming eyes.

CHAPTER 3.

Trouble on the Cricket Field!

JIMSON MAJOR did not seem to be afraid. He jammed his spectacles on his nose again, and watched the Grammar School bully as he came.

Hake was within a few paces of him, and already reaching out a hand to seize him, when he uplifted his bat.

"Keep off!" he squeaked.

"You young hound, I'll—"

"Keep off, or I'm afraid you'll get hurt!"

But Hake did not keep off, and he did get hurt. As he sprang towards the new boy the latter thrust the end of the bat forward, and it caught Hake on the chest.

Hake sat down violently.

Jimson major blinked at him.

"I warned you, you know," he said calmly.

Hake remained sitting where he was for some moments, dazed, and too enraged to speak. The Grammarian juniors were grinning round him. Jimson major could have made good his retreat, but he showed no desire to do so. He stood blinking down at the fallen bully.

Hake scrambled up at last. He was livid with rage. Without a word, he hurled himself at the new boy.

But as he did so, Jimson minor put out a foot, and Hake tripped over it, and he fell towards Jimson major.

The latter gave him a gentle side tap, which rolled him over, and once again the Grammar School bully went to the grass.

"My hat!" gasped Frank Monk.

"Hake'll smash him!" said Carboy.

Hake rose again slowly. Jimson major flourished his cricket bat.

"Keep off!" he exclaimed. "I warn you that you'll get hurt if you don't! I'm rather dangerous at close quarters."

Hake glared at him, and at the bat. He did not feel inclined to push matters further just then. He was hurt, and he had to deal with a junior who was not afraid. His captain, calling him angrily to return, gave him a chance of retreat.

He shook his fist at the new boy.

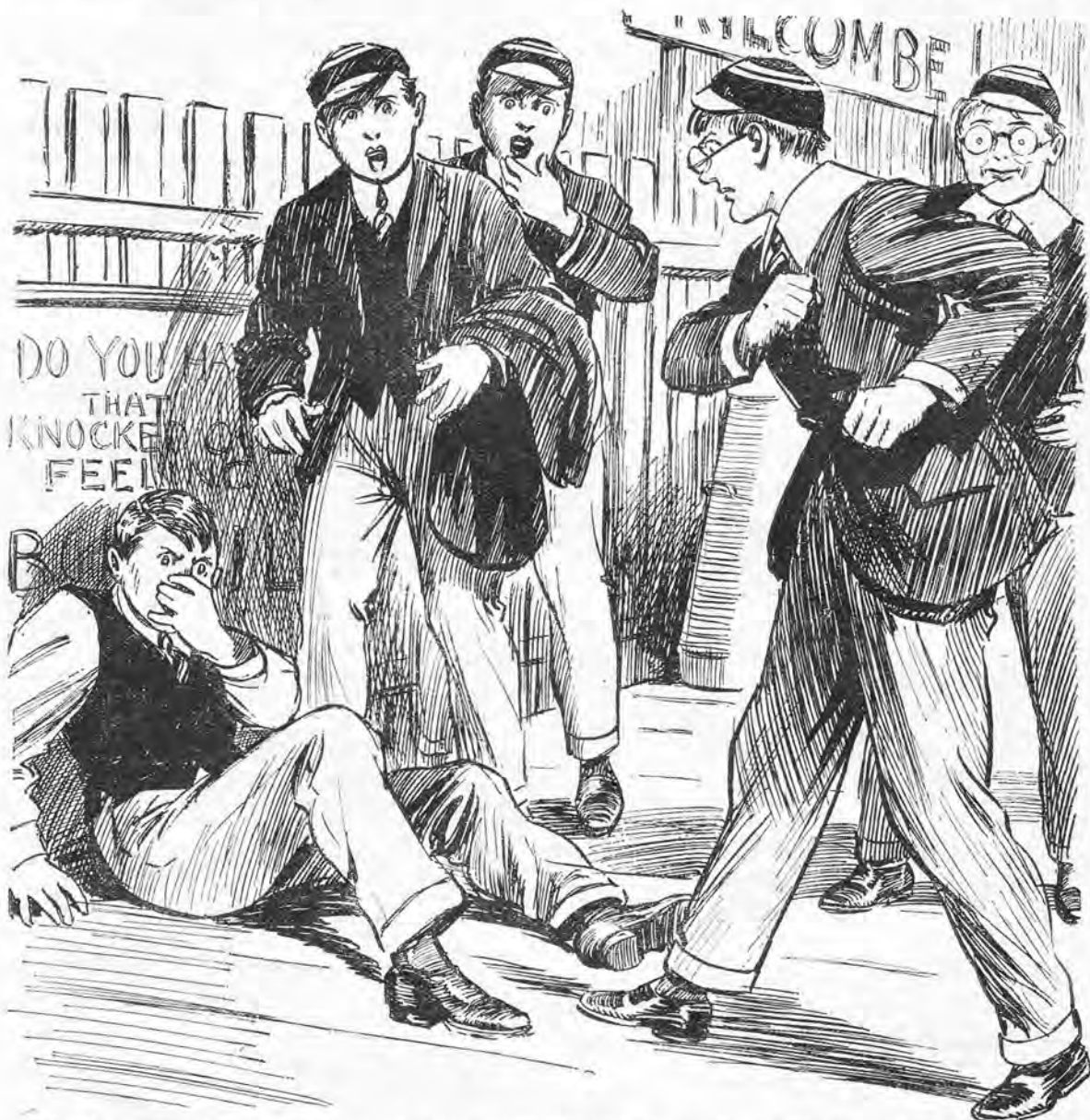
a bully and a beast, and we don't like him any more than you do."

"I'm glad to see that you've got some good taste, at all events."

"You cheeky young beggar! I can see that I shall have to give you a thick ear, whether I want to or not."

"Go ahead!"

"Stuff! There's the tea-bell, and we've missed cricket practice for the afternoon, now, through fooling about after these spectacled rotters at the station, and wasting time over



Monk's guard was swept up and a tap on the nose placed him in a sitting position on the platform before he knew what was happening. Jimson major replaced his spectacles and blinked down at him. "I hope I haven't hurt you," he squeaked.

"You wait a bit!" he hissed. "I can't attend to you now. I'll see you later!"

"Right you are, kid. Send in your card any time you like, and I'll give my footman instructions to admit you," said Jimson major.

The juniors giggled, and Hake ground his teeth, and strode away.

"My word," said Frank Monk, "you are a cool beast, young Jimson!"

"Thank you! Any more bowling?"

Monk laughed.

"Not just now. You've shown that you can play. We'll let you off for your cheek. You slanged Hake a treat. He's

them now," said Monk. "Come in to tea, you new kids. I suppose I ought to look after you a bit. This way!"

The new juniors exchanged glances. Then they followed Frank Monk into the big, red-bricked building that was so startling a contrast to St. Jim's, with its ancient, ivy-covered walls.

A somewhat thin and irritable-looking gentleman, with a pair of pince-nez clasping almost the tip of his prominent nose, met them in the hall.

He shifted his glasses a little, and looked at them. Jimson major and minor took their caps off respectfully. Frank Monk hurriedly whispered to them:

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"That's Slinger, the beak!"
 Mr. Slinger looked at the youths in spectacles.
 "Ahem! Are you the new boys?"
 "Yes sir," squeaked Jimson major, in that peculiar voice of his.
 "Ah! I think I saw you mixed up in some affray from my window!" said Mr. Slinger sourly.
 "I hope not, sir!"
 "What! Were you not mixed up in an affray on the cricket ground just now?"
 "Yes, sir."
 "Then what do you mean by saying you hope not, Jimson?"
 "I hope you did not see us, sir, I mean," said Jimson major demurely.
 "Oh, you are a very stupid boy!"
 "Thank you, sir!"
 Mr. Slinger looked sharply at the elder boy. His face was quite grave and solemn, and it seemed impossible to Mr. Slinger that any boy, new or old, could possibly dare to be "funny" with him. So he passed it over.
 "Humph! I have not received any instructions from Dr. Monk regarding you, and so your place in the school will remain unsettled until he returns. You will be in the same Form with Monk until then."

"Yes, sir."
 "Monk will show you where you are to sleep in the dormitory. It is very curious that Dr. Monk did not mention your coming to me before he went away."

"Yes, sir."
 "I was quite surprised to receive the telegram."

"Yes, sir."
 Mr. Slinger sniffed.

"You may go!"
 "Yes, sir."

And they went.
 "The Slinger bird doesn't like you, apparently," grinned Frank Monk, as they hurried off. "Look here! I don't like you either, as a matter of fact, but I'll look after you a bit. I suppose you want a bit of a wash after your journey, before you have tea? Come up here!"

"You're very good."
 "Yes! I'm wasting time and trouble on you, and you're not worth it. Blessed if I know what I'm doing it for!" said Monk.

The new boys laughed, and followed Monk. They washed and brushed down, and Monk found them combs and brushes. After that, they looked and felt much better. Monk was not curious or suspicious, and he did not notice how lightly the two boys passed over their faces, as if they were afraid of disturbing their complexions.

As he combed his hair, Jimson major looked round the junior dormitory. Rylcombe Grammar School was a much smaller establishment than St. Jim's, and had less than half the number of boys. There were two dormitories—junior and senior—both very large rooms, with long rows of beds. On the walls of the junior dormitory—very plain, blue-washed walls—were various attempts at adornment. There were some pictures, and some foils and rackets hung up, and near Frank Monk's bed were several cricket stumps bracketed to the wall.

Jimson major looked at them curiously.

"Is that something new in decorations?" he asked.

Monk glanced at the stumps, and grinned.

"They're trophies," he explained.

"Eh? Trophies?"

"Yes; captured from the enemy!"

"Blessed if I catch on!"

"He's pulling our legs!" said Jimson minor. "They're cricket stumps."

"All the same, they're trophies," grinned Monk. "I suppose you chaps have heard of St. Jim's?"

Jimson major wrinkled his brows thoughtfully.

"St. Jim's? Is it a school?"

"Of course it is!" snorted Monk. "Did you think it was a hospital, or a cemetery? It's a school near here, and the boys there are a set of cheeky bounders. They have a curious idea that they can keep their end up against us, and, of course, that's all rot! Every now and then we have to put them in their place!"

"My word!"

"We gave them a big licking the other day—raided their cricket field, and collared their stumps for trophies!" said Monk. "We're keeping them up there to show that we've licked them."

"You've licked the stumps?"

"No, idiot! We've licked the Saints!" howled Monk. "We've stuck them up here as trophies! The St. Jim's chaps have vowed to have them back, but they can't do it!"

"Can't they?"

"Of course they can't! I suppose they're not likely to venture into here?"

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"N-n-no, I suppose not," said Jimson major; and Jimson minor chuckled, as if he found something amusing in the bare idea.

"Those stumps will stick there till they crumble away," said Monk, with an air of satisfaction—"or until the St. Jim's fellows come along and ask humbly for them."

"They won't do that!"

"How the dickens do you know?" demanded Frank.

Jimson major coloured.

"I mean, I—I think they won't," he said.

"Blessed if I can see how you know anything about it. The St. Jim's chaps will have to climb down, or we keep those trophies nailed up. In fact, we shan't part with them till we get a nice polite letter asking for them—and then we shall nail that up instead."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you cackling about?"

"I was thinking that they're sure to write you a nice polite letter."

"Oh, come down to tea!" growled Monk. "I think you're off your rockers, the pair of you! Blessed if I've ever seen such a pair of owls in my life!"

And the new boys in the Grammar School followed Frank Monk downstairs.

CHAPTER 4.

Jimson Minimus!

AFTER tea the Grammarians left the big room, and Jimson major and Jimson minor went out with the rest.

As they walked along a youngster suddenly hailed them from behind.

"My only Aunt Jane! It's them, right enough!"

Major and minor jumped simultaneously, for they knew that voice. They turned round as if moved by the same spring, and saw, standing with his hands in his pockets, regarding them coolly through a big pair of spectacles, a youth in clothes almost exactly like their own.

"Hallo! Who are you?" exclaimed Carboy.

The newcomer grinned.

"I'm their younger brother, old sport—Jimson minimus."

"Wh-a-a-at!"

Jimson minimus smiled at the astounded new boys of Rylcombe Grammar School. Jimson major and Jimson minor looked at him as if they could hardly believe their eyes.

The newcomer was dressed in a quiet brown suit. He had a somewhat red nose, a smear of ink on one cheek, and large spectacles. He looked, in general aspect, like the Jimsons. Yet the Jimsons did not seem to have expected a third brother of the family to arrive at the Grammar School.

They stared at the minimus blankly.

Frank Monk and the rest of the Grammarians stared at him, too. There was something very cool and impertinent in the bearing of Jimson minimus.

"Hallo, young shaver!"

"Hallo, Monkey!"

Frank Monk turned red.

"So you're another Jimson, are you," said Carboy, before Monk could think of a suitable reply—"another of the happy family?"

"Yes; I'm a Jimson as much as they are—Jimson minimus. How do you do, kids?" said Jimson minimus, digging the major and minor alternately in the ribs. "How is the world using you, my sons?"

"Ow!"

"Oh!"

"Well, that's a cool kid, and no mistake," said Lane.

"Are there any more at home like you?"

"No—we're the lot, funny face!"

"What's that?" shouted Lane.

"Didn't seem to expect me, you two," grinned the minimus.

"You didn't know it was decided to send me at the same time as your noble selves—eh?"

"N-no!" stammered the major.

"Blessed funny family altogether," said Frank Monk.

"I don't know what to make of them, and that's the fact."

"It's all right," said Jimson major, recovering himself.

"It's all right—I'm glad to see you've got here safe and sound, minimus!"

"Yes, rather!" said the minor.

"Come along with us," went on the major. "So long, Monkey! You've got here too late for tea, kid."

Jimson minimus nodded.

"Can't be helped! I suppose I shall be able to raise a feed somewhere?"

"Blessed if I know where, then. The fellows don't seem to feed in their studies—not the juniors, at all events."

"Perhaps some nice senior will ask me to tea."

"Yes—I don't think!"

The three Jimsons strolled out into the school grounds, followed by a good many glances from the Grammarians. The new boys had made rather a peculiar impression upon the Lower School, and the Grammarians did not quite know what to make of them.

The major and minor preserved an attitude and manner of brotherly interest in the minims till they were well out of sight. Then they exchanged sudden glances, and turned upon the newcomer.

The third Jimson wriggled in the sudden grip of his "brothers."

"I've a jolly good mind to give you a fearful licking," said the disguised Tom Merry, compressing his grasp upon the scamp of the Third Form at St. Jim's.

"Hold on—"

"Frogs-march him!" growled Kerr.

"Chuck it! I'll yell if you do!"

"Look here—"

"The Grammarians will think you're an unbrotherly set if I yell for help!" chuckled Wally. "Hands off!"

Tom Merry and Kerr looked at him with very peculiar expressions. But there was no doubt that the fag was master of the situation.

They released him, and Wally chuckled again. He blinked curiously behind the big spectacles.

"Run go, ain't it?" he said easily.



As Hake sprang towards the new boy the latter thrust the end of his bat forward and it caught Hake in the chest. Hake sat down violently. "I warned you, you know!" said Jimson major calmly.

"You young rascal!" hissed Jimson major.

"You little beast!" snapped Jimson minor.

The fag chuckled.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you villainous young ass, Wally! You might have spoiled it all!"

"Rats to you, Tom Merry!"

"You've increased the danger a dozen times," said Jimson minor.

"Rats to you, Kerr!"

"You young rascal! How did you know anything about it?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Did Gussy give it away?"

"Not much!" said Wally promptly.

"Then how did you know?" demanded Tom Merry.

"I did some scouting while you were holding your precious council of war," said Wally coolly. "I was in hearing all the time."

"My—my hat!"

"And I was on the roof of the old barn when you were changing your things and getting on the disguise," chuckled Wally.

"You—you young monkey!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I've a jolly good mind to give you a licking, and chance it!" said Kerr.

"Better not. If the Grammarians find out how you've done them, they'll skin you," said Wally coolly. "You can't do it."

Kerr unclenched his hands.

"You wait till we get you back to St. Jim's!"

"That's all right, cocky! I came here to help. The Third Form had to have a hand in the business!" exclaimed Wally. "I couldn't leave you old fogies to get into all sorts of muddles. I had to see you through."

"You cheeky young villain!"

"Cheese it! I'm here to help, so don't make trouble. I don't want to have to start by licking you."

Tom Merry laughed.

"Well, we shall have to put up with you now you're here," he remarked.

"Of course you will!" said Wally cheerfully. "Better make the best of it. Besides, I'm going to help. We've got to make the Grammarians sing small."

"Look here, you just keep your place, and follow your leader, and—"

"No fear! My place is to lead."

"Why, you—you—"

"Cave! Here comes a Grammar School rotter!"

It was Hake who was coming along. He saw the new boys, and stopped with an exceedingly ugly look on his face.

"So there's another of you, eh?" he said.

"Yes; we're three, old cock!" said Wally cheerily.

Hake scowled, and let out with his open hand. It was a sudden blow, so sudden that Wally could not guard it. It caught him on the side of the head, and he went reeling into a flower-bed.

"Oh! Oh! Oh!"

Hake looked down at him with a savage grin.

"That'll teach you to keep your tongue between your teeth, perhaps," he said.

"You coward!" shouted Tom Merry.

Wally staggered to his feet. Hake turned to Tom Merry, alias Jimson major, with a sneer on his ill-featured face.

"Do you want some?" he asked. "I haven't settled with you over that affair on the cricket field, you young cad! Look here! I'm in want of a fag. Seniors have always the pick of new boys for their fags. I pick you."

"I'll see you hanged first!" said Tom Merry.

"Will you? Mind, it's a rule of the school, and if you make any trouble, I'll give you beans," said Hake savagely.

"If you want to be ragged by half a dozen seniors, you'd better say so."

Tom Merry bit his lip.

Hake eyed him with savage triumph in his glance. If he made the new boy his fag, he would have every opportunity of wreaking vengeance upon him—or so he thought.

A sudden thought flashed into Tom Merry's mind, and he nodded his head.

"You want me for your fag, Hake?"

"I've said so."

"What am I to do?"

"Go to my study and clear it up," said Hake, speaking with relish. "Then mend the fire, make the tea, and see that there's plenty on the table to eat and drink."

"It's all in the study, I suppose?"

"If there isn't much, you can get it at the school shop."

"What about the cash?"

"That's no business of mine," said Hake, shrugging his shoulders. "You'd better see that there's a good tea, that's all."

Tom Merry's lips curled. He understood what Hake meant. There were bullies in the Upper Forms at St. Jim's who followed the same line. The fags could spend their pocket-money, or run up accounts, to provide feeds for their lords and masters, with little prospect in some cases of being reimbursed.

"Cut off!" said Hake. "My study's No. 15 in the second passage."

He was prepared for resistance and refusal, but the new boy did not resist or refuse. He nodded cheerfully.

"Come on, kids!" he said. "I've got to fag for Hake. Will you lend a hand?"

"Rather!" said Kerr.

"What-ho!" said Wally.

And the three Jimsons walked away towards the House. Hake glanced after them, with a chuckle.

"I'll make the brat sit up yet!" he muttered. "I'll teach

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him to biff me with a cricket bat! If he doesn't get me a ripping tea, I'll make him think that life isn't worth living at this school!"

And Hake grinned. Perhaps he would not have grinned if he had known what was passing in the minds of Jimson major, minor, and minimus.

CHAPTER 5.

Fagging for Hake!

TOM MERRY chuckled as the trio entered the red-bricked building.

It was nearly dark now, and the lamps were being lighted. Frank Monk met the new boys in the Hall, and Tom Merry stopped to speak.

"Do you know where Hake's study is?" he asked.

"Yes, rather! You're not going there, are you? I should advise you to keep clear of Hake, after what's happened to-day."

"He's chosen me for his fag."

"Then I'm sorry for you, Jimson."

"He'll be sorry for himself by the time I've finished fagging for him," said Jimson major calmly. "He's just knocked young Wa—my young brother, I mean—over in a way that a hooligan would be ashamed of. He's a bullying beast. I'm going to make him sit up!"

Frank Monk looked very serious.

"You'd better be careful how you go for Hakey," he said. "He's an utter beast, and he's backed up by the worst set among the seniors. He'll make it warm for you."

"Curious; we are just going to make it warm for him."

"Well, look out, that's all."

"We're looking out—rather! Show us where his study is."

"This way," said Frank.

He left them at the senior's study, still looking somewhat concerned for them.

The three Jimsons entered the study and looked about them. It was a very well-appointed room, for Hake was one of the best-off fellows at the Grammar School.

Tom Merry closed the door and grinned at his comrades.

"We're going to fag for Hake," he said. "What?"

"Yes, rather! Ha, ha, ha!"

"We're going to stand him a tea—at our own expense."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hakey is understudying the 'Babes in the Wood' for innocence, and no mistake!" said Kerr. "If he only knew!"

"If he only did! My hat!"

"But he doesn't. We mustn't waste time," went on Tom Merry seriously. "The great Hake has only allowed us half an hour."

"Begin with the cupboard," said Kerr.

"Right you are!"

Tom Merry threw open the cupboard. It contained a goodly array of crockery and cutlery, the latter in a neat plush basket. But of provisions there were little. There was bread, but little more.

"H'm!" said Wally, with a sniff. "This won't do for me."

"Cut down to the shop and get some more, then," said Tom Merry, fishing a couple of half-crowns out of his pocket. "Here you are!"

"Good! I'll be back in a jiffy."

The entrance of Jimson minimus into the school shop attracted general attention from the juniors there. When they saw his purchases, there was a general exclamation of "Halves!"

"Oh, he's fagging for Hake!" said Monk.

And then Jimson minimus was left alone.

If the purchases were for Hake, the juniors did not care to touch them. Hake had a long arm and a long memory.

Wally only grinned. He completed his purchases and quitted the shop, carrying his provisions in a borrowed basket to Hake's study.

The bully of the Grammar School met him in the passage. Carne, his chum, was with him, and both looked at the basket.

"Grub in that?" asked Hake.

"Yes, please," said Jimson minimus, with a meekness that would have alarmed Hake if he had known Wally D'Arcy, of the Third Form at St. Jim's. But he did not, and so he was not warned.

"Let's have a look!"

Wally opened the basket. The two seniors looked into it, and exchanged glances of satisfaction.

"Good!" said Hake. "Pickles, ham, tongue! Good!"

"And cold beef," said Carne; "and rabbit-pie! Oh, good!"

"I'm glad you like it," said Wally.

"It's all right. You can cut along and tell your precious brothers that we shall be in to tea in ten minutes, and if it's not ready we'll warm the lot of you!"

"Yes, please!"

"Cut off, you young monkey!"

Wally cut off. He re-entered the senior's study, and plumped the basket down on the table with a grin.

"Hake and Carne will be here in ten minutes, and if tea isn't ready they're going to warm us all!" he announced.

Tom Merry laughed. He locked the door and took out the key; and then the three juniors took off their spectacles for additional comfort.

"Let 'em all come!" said Kerr. "They won't get into this room in a hurry. The door isn't quite so strong as our old oak doors at St. Jim's, but I think it's strong enough to stand anything Hake & Co. can do!"

"Ha, ha, ha! If you want any more fuel, here's the bookcase!"

"No; I think this will be all right. The kettle's nearly boiling."

The tea was soon ready. The three juniors of St. Jim's had settled down at the table when there was a hand on the door. The handle rattled, and as the door did not open there was a savage kick at the lower panels.

"Open this door!" shouted Hake, from outside.

And the voice of Carne was heard, adding some lurid threats of what would happen to the fags if the door wasn't immediately opened. But it wasn't, all the same.



Hake caught up a chair and swung it above his head. There was a shout from the passage, "Hold on, you fool!" Hake did not heed. But Tom Merry was on his guard, and he lunged forward with the red-hot poker. "Ow! Yow!" yelled the Grammarian.

"I fancy so," said Tom Merry, jamming the back of a chair under the handle for additional security. "Now for tea. I'm ready for another feed."

"So am I!"

"And I'm famished," said Wally.

The feed did not take long to prepare. Tom Merry had to light the fire, and as there was no fuel at hand he was compelled to break up a hutch he found in a corner. The hutch had once contained white rabbits, but it was untenanted now, and it served the purpose nicely.

"Very forgetful of Hake to set his fags to lighting fires without supplying fuel," Tom Merry remarked, with a shake of the head. "But perhaps he expects his fags to keep him in fuel as well as in grub."

Kick! Bang! Thump!

"Open this door!"

"Anybody there?" called out Tom Merry, in the squeaky, high-pitched voice he had adopted as Jimson major.

"Yes, you young sweep! I'm Hake!"

"Sure?" asked Tom Merry.

"Eh? What? What do you mean?"

"Well, you might be mackerel, you know, or haddock!"

The juniors giggled, and Hake, in the passage, muttered something. He kicked savagely at the door.

"Will you let me in?"

"Can't be did. We're having tea."

"What?" roared Hake.

"Are you deaf? I should advise you to consult a specialist."

"You—you—you—"

"Deafness can always be cured if taken in time. I should recommend—"

"Will you open this door?"

"Eh? The door? Oh, no!"

Thump, thump, thump!

"Pass the ham," said Tom Merry. "This tongue is ripping! Another cup of tea, please!"

"Here you are."

"Thanks! Good tea this!"

"Yes, rather! And the ham—"

"Ripping!"

The clicking of knives and forks and teacups were quite audible through the study door. In the passage, Hake and Carne glared at one another in helpless rage. They were nonplussed. If the fags did not choose to let them into the study they could not get in. They might have vengeance presently, but just now—just now the three juniors were enjoying a hearty meal.

CHAPTER 6.

A More than Spring Cleaning!

THUMP, thump, thump!

Hake thumped and Carne kicked, and both of them raved, but all without effect. The door remained closed, and from within still sounded the merry voices, the click of crockery, and the various sounds of the feed.

"Another cup of tea, old dear?"

"Certainly!"

"Pass the ham! What ripping ham!"



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"Spiffing! Sounds like somebody making a row in the passage. I wonder if it's anybody wants to come in?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Hake's voice came rumbling through the keyhole. The Grammar School bully was nearly choking with rage. Fellows were collecting in the passage to look on at the siege of the study, and they were all laughing. Hake was not a favourite, and the revolt of the fags excited only amusement—for all except Hake and Carne. They were quivering with fury.

"If you open this door now, you whelps, I'll let you off!"

"Eh? I'm not a cracker," said Tom Merry. "I don't want to be let off!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Will you open this door?"

"We're having tea."

"I'll skin you alive!"

"Sorry we can't ask you in, Hake. We really haven't enough for a guest; and, besides, you're such an awful pig, you know!"

"I'll—I'll smash you!"

"Did you speak?"

"I'll—I'll pulverise you!"

"Anybody there?"

"Open the door!"

"Sounds like somebody in the passage, kids. Anybody there?"

Hake almost suffocated with rage. There was a crowd up and down the passage all laughing. Hake stamped on the floor.

"I'll smash them!" he hissed. "Oh, my word, if I could only get hold of them! Wait till I get the door open, that's all!"

Crash!

It was a terrific noise within the study, and told of an upset table and smashing of crockery-ware.

Hake jumped.

"What on earth's that?"

Crash, crash, crash!

Hake tapped furiously at the door.

"What are you young demons doing?"

"Clearing up the study!"

"What?"

"You told us to. You're going to skin us if we don't. We've just cleared the table for a start. We've finished tea, thank you!"

"I—I—"

"I'm afraid some of the crocks are broken. That's through being in a hurry. You didn't give us very much time."

Hake gasped with rage. He knew that the three juniors were deliberately wrecking the study. They would get the worst he could inflict at his hands, anyway; and so, no doubt, their idea was to avenge themselves beforehand.

The juniors had cleared the table by the simple expedient of tilting it over, and sending everything upon it into the grate. Hake's crockeryware suffered, of course; but, as Tom Merry remarked, they had not asked to fag for him. If he impressed fags into his service, he must expect to take the consequences.

"We'll do out the cupboard next," said Tom Merry. "Hand me that broom."

Kerr handed him the broom.

Tom Merry cleared out the cupboard by the simple method of thrusting into it the head of the broom and dragging out everything movable.

Crash on crash upon the floor warned the unhappy Hake that his cupboard was being successfully cleared out.

Wally cocked his eye thoughtfully at the glass over the mantelpiece.

"I suppose that ought to come down!" he remarked. "We want to make a thorough job of it, and they always take the glasses down in the spring cleaning at home. Can you see how it's fastened, Kerr—I mean, Reginald?"

"Yes. Two brass-headed nails in the wall."

"Then it ought to come down easily enough."

Wally thrust the poker behind the glass and wrenched. There was a yell from Kerr.

"Look out!"

"What's the matter?"

"You'll smash it!"

"Dear me!"

Crash!

The glass came down with a run upon the overturned table. There was a smashing and a shattering that could be heard the length of the corridor.

Thump, thump, thump!

Hake was attacking the door again. The crashing in the study almost made him weep with rage. But the door was

fast, and the three spring cleaners in the study showed no disposition to open it.

"What about the bookcase?" asked Tom Merry.

"Well, the books ought to be turned out, I suppose?"

"I suppose so. Lend a hand."

The bookcase was tilted forward, and the books and papers shot out upon the carpet, along with a couple of drawers, from which writing materials and inks and pens distributed themselves among the ruins.

The chums of St. Jim's looked round them with much satisfaction.

"We're getting on," Tom Merry remarked.

"Ha, ha, ha! Looks like it!"

Thump, thump, thump!

"Hallo! That sounds like a gentle tap at the door. Anybody there?"

"Let me in?" came Hake's muffled voice through the key-hole.

"Can't be did, my son! We're clearing up the study!"

"Stop it!" hissed Hake.

"Stop what?"

"Let the study alone!"

"But you told us to clean it up."

Hake ground his teeth. The crowd of Grammarians roared.

"You can let it alone," said Hake. "I—I don't want you to fag for me."

"Now you're talking!" said Tom Merry heartily. "Are you sure you don't want us to fag for you any more?"

"Yes—yes."

"Are you absolutely sure?"

"Yes!"

"You let us off fagging for you?"

"Yes," hissed Hake.

It was the only way to save the rest of his goods, he knew; but it was a bitter pill to swallow.

"Good! And you won't bear malice for what we've done, if you don't quite like the way we've cleaned up your study?"

"N-n-no!"

"You won't go for us in any way when the door's opened?"

Hake was silent.

"Deaf again, Hakey?" asked Merry pleasantly.

"I'll skin you alive!" hissed Hake.

"Ah! You won't make it pax!"

"No!" yelled Hake, shaking furiously at the handle of the door. "Open this door, you young demons! I'll skin you alive!"

Crash!

Hake gave a gasp. He knew that it was the smash of his bookcase, and he guessed that the table had been tumbled over on it.

"Stop it!" he yelled. "Stop it, you young demons!"

"Will you make it pax?"

"No!" screamed Hake. "No, I won't!"

Crash!

It was the sound of a clock falling into the grate.

Hake stifled his rage.

"Stop it! I—I—I'll make it pax!"

The fury in his face was sufficient indication that he would not keep his word. He would have said anything then to stop the wrecking of his study, and to get at close quarters with the juniors.

"Pax? Honour bright, Hakey?"

"Yes!" snarled Hake. "Open the door!"

"Right-ho!"

The door was flung open.

"You asses!" yelled Frank Monk. "He won't keep his word! He—"

Hake rushed furiously into the study.

CHAPTER 7.

Signed—Tom Merry!

HAKE did not intend to keep his word. He meant to get to close quarters with the rebellious fags and wreak his wrath upon them.

Tom Merry and his chums had not been careless enough to trust to the word of a fellow like Hake. True, a fellow who would be base enough to attack them after making it pax, might be rare. But Hake had never shown any love of fair play or honourable dealings. It was best to be prepared, and they were right. It would have gone hard with them if they had trusted to Hake's honour.

Tom Merry had the poker in his hand, and it had been between the bars for the last ten minutes and so was glowing red with heat at the end. Kerr had the tongs, equally red-hot at the tips.

(Continued on the next page.)



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Sandy: "How are you getting on with that coat-hanger I gave you?"

Mike: "Not so well. The wood hurts my shoulders and the hook keeps knocking my hat off!"

EDWARD SIMMONS, 58, Pineapple Road, Stirchley, Birmingham.

SOME STORY!

Father: "And now, my boy, you have heard the story of what your father did in the Great War."

Son: "Yes; but what did they want all the other soldiers for?"

JOAN STRONGMAN, 16, Hutchinson Terrace, Edinburgh.

FLOORED!

Estate Agent (showing prospective buyer over house): "Here we have a house without a flaw."

Client: "Great Scott! What on earth do you walk on?"

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THEY LOVED IT!

Stage Manager: "By jove, you're getting a terrific ovation, they're still clapping. What did you say?"

Actor: "I told them I wouldn't go on with my turn until they kept quiet!"

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Foreman (on excavation job): "Are you fit for hard labour?"

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DOUBLE CROSSED!

"Stick 'em up, big boy!"

"I can't. I got rheumatics in my hands."

"I got automatics in mine, big boy!"

"O.K., boss, you win!"

F. THORNLEY, 8, Stockholm Street, Clayton, Manchester.

MISUNDERSTOOD!

Father: "No, Willy, I can't do your homework for you. It would not be right."

Willy: "Probably not, dad, but you might have a shot!"

SYDNEY BLAKE, 89, Stubbin Lane, Firth Park, Sheffield.

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ST. JIM'S FOR EVER!

(Continued from page 11.)

Wally had armed himself with a large bottle of ink. The three stood shoulder to shoulder, ready for Hake. The bully rushed at them blindly, and only stopped just in time to save himself from the red-hot poker.

Tom Merry flourished the glowing tip in his face.

"Hold on, Hakey!"

Hake jumped back, gasping with rage.

"Put that poker down!" he roared.

"No fear!"

"Put it down or——"

"Rats!"

Hake clenched and unclenched his hands. He was in so great a fury that he hardly knew what he was doing. He caught up a chair, and swung it in the air.

There was a shout from the passage:

"Hold on, you fool!"

Hake did not heed; but Tom Merry was on his guard. He lunged forward, and there was a shriek from Hake, and the chair crashed to the floor as the poker just touched his hand.

"Ow, ow, ow!"

The senior sucked his hand and danced with rage.

"Serve you right!" exclaimed Northcote, the captain of the Grammar School. "You fool! What were you going to do?"

"Look what he's done!"

"Yes; and look what you were going to do," said Northcote contemptuously. "I haven't much sympathy for a bully!"

"I'll—I'll smash him!"

"Well, I dare say a licking won't hurt him, for his cheek, but you'd better not go too far, or you'll have to reckon with me."

"Mind your own business!"

Hake was in a towering rage, or he would never have spoken like that to the Grammar School captain. Northcote stepped up to him.

"Say that again!" he requested politely.

"I—I—— Why can't you let me alone?"

"That's better," said Northcote. "Remember what I've said, that's all."

And he walked away. But most of the Grammarians remained to see the fun. They wondered how it would all end.

Hake fixed his eyes upon Tom Merry. Tom had replaced his spectacles, and was Jimson major again.

"Put that poker down, Jimson!"

"Rats!"

Hake came forward, his fists clenched. The poker was lifted and he recoiled. He gritted his teeth hard.

"Very well, I'll wait!" he hissed.

"Not much, you won't!" said Tom Merry coolly. "You'll scoot, or I'll warm you. Out you go!"

"What!"

"Get out!"

"I won't! I——"

"I'm afraid you'll get burnt if you don't! There, I told

you so, and there again! If you get in the way of a hot poker you are bound to get burnt."

"Ow! Oh! Ow!"

"There again——"

"Ow! Wow!"

"You'd better bunk, Hakey!"

Hake thought so, too. He strode from the study, white with rage; and Tom Merry, with a laugh, hurled the poker into the grate. Carne gave the juniors a very peculiar look and followed his chum. The Grammarians were roaring with laughter. Frank Monk gave Tom Merry a ringing slap on the shoulder.

"My word!" he said. "You'll do! I never saw such a cool beggar in all my natural as you are, Jimson."

Tom Merry laughed.

"Only look out for Hake!" said Carboy. "My hat! You've made a wreck of the place. Serve him jolly well right, the bully!"

"Come on, kids!" said Tom Merry. "We shall have to stick together if that brute goes for us. If he touches any one of us, all three are to pile on him, remember, and give him jip."

"What-ho!"

The three Jimsons left Hake's study.

An admiring crowd of Grammarians stuck to them for a time, and it was half an hour or more before Tom Merry, who had his own plans to carry out, was able to get rid of them.

Meanwhile, Hake was not looking for the new boys.

He had had a severe lesson, and his burns were smarting, and upon reflection he had resolved to postpone his vengeance till a safer opportunity later in the evening.

"Let the young brutes wait till after lights-out!" he said thickly, as he bathed his injuries. "I'll go into the junior dormitory with a dog-whip, Carne, and if I don't make 'em squirm, my name's not Hake!"

Carne grinned.

"Jolly good wheeze," he agreed. "Tackle the young beast when he's got no chance of getting hold of a cricket bat or a poker, and when Northcote isn't about to stop you."

"That's the idea! I'll make him sit up to-night."

And so, for the present, the Grammar School bully let the new boys alone.

"My word!" said Frank Monk, as half-past eight rang out from the big clock. "It's more than time we did our prep."

"Let's get along to the study," said Carboy. "Come on, Lane. You can leave that book."

The three Grammarian chums left the Common-room and went to their study. Frank Monk lighted the gas.

The next moment he gave a yell.

"My hat!"

"What's the matter?" exclaimed Lane and Carboy together.

"Look at that!"

Monk was pointing at the looking-glass over the mantel-piece.

Carboy and Lane followed the direction of his finger, and exclamations of rage and wonder broke from them. For upon the clear glass were traced, by a finger dipped in red ink, the following words:

"DOWN WITH THE GRAMMAR SCHOOL!"

"(Signed) TOM MERRY."

Potts, the Office Boy!



The three Grammarians stared at one another blankly.
 "Tom Merry!"
 "He's been here!"
 "My hat!"

CHAPTER 8. Trophies of War!

"BETTER leave it till bed-time."

It was Kerr—alias Jinson minor—who spoke. The three Jimsons were conversing in a corner of the Common-room at the Grammar School, in subdued tones.

A good many of the Grammarians had glanced towards them, wondering what the whispered confabulation was about. They would have opened their eyes wide if they had known.

Tom Merry shook his head in reply to Kerr's remark. "No good wasting time," he said. "We've run the gauntlet safely so far, but there's no telling how long it may last."

"My only Aunt Jane!" said Wally, with a chuckle. "I should think so. I know Monk & Co. think we're a set of queer fish already. They may begin to suspect at any time."

"All through you shoving yourself in," said Kerr.

"Rats!" said Wally cheerfully.

"Never mind that now," said Tom Merry. "Wally's here, anyway. I only hope no more duffers will follow us from St. Jim's. Gussy was very anxious to make one of the party, and I should not be surprised if he happened along, disguised as a bootlace merchant, or a grass-cutter, or something."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If he did, the game would be up at once. It may be up at any moment, anyway, and we may have to run for it. We came here chiefly to get back the trophies the Grammar cads collared from us on the cricket field at St. Jim's."

"That's so!"

"Now we've got a chance. They're hung on the walls of the dormitory. Frank Monk thinks they're quite safe there from anybody."

"He little knows!" grinned Wally.

"Exactly! But he may know that they're in danger any moment. The young boulder's looking towards us now, as if he'd like to know what we were talking about. He was jawing something very excitedly a little while back. He's seen the inscription on the glass in his study."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My idea is to get to the dorm and make sure of those trophies at the earliest possible moment, in case of accidents."

"I dare say you're right. But when we've got them?"

"We'll sling them over the wall into the road, and Wally can cut back to St. Jim's with them quickly."

"No fear!" said Wally promptly. "Kerr can cut back with them."

"Now, look here, Wally—"

"Nuff said! I'm here till the finish."

"Very well, they can be slung into a tree or something, where we can get them afterwards," said Tom Merry. "Never mind that now; the chief thing is to get them."

But look here, Wally, you'll get into a row if you're late for calling-over."

"I shall stay here as long as you do."

"All right, you young ass!"

"Yes. I've got permission to join the party."

"What party?"

"Your party," said Wally coolly. "I got permission from Mr. Railton. He didn't guess, of course, that you hadn't asked me."

"My hat!" Tom Merry looked grimly at the scamp of the Third Form at St. Jim's. "I don't know whether to lick you or—"

"Rats!" said Wally unceremoniously. "Get on with the washing. Suppose you two keep an eye on the Grammar cads while I collar the stumps out of the dorm."

Tom Merry laughed.

"The programme's all right," he said, "only I shouldn't like to entrust it to you. You and Kerr can keep watch."

"Look here—"

"Oh, ring off! You're too cheeky for a fag!"

"Hallo, what's the confab about?" asked Frank Monk, crossing over to the three.

"Confab!" said Jinson major. "Oh, we were just talking!"

"I say, Monkey," said Kerr, "where is the school library?"

"On the ground floor."

"Show me where it is, will you?"

"Certainly!"

Kerr winked at Tom Merry and followed Monk. Tom understood at once. It was a device for getting Monk, the keenest of all the Grammar School juniors, out of the way for a time.

Tom Merry and Wally strolled into the passage, and thence by easy stages upstairs. The upper passage was deserted, and there was a glimmer of light there. In the dormitory all was dark.

"You wait here, kid," whispered Tom Merry. "Warn me if anybody comes along."

"Right-ho!"

Leaving Wally in the passage, Tom Merry entered the dormitory.

He lighted the gas, and looked about him. The cricket trophies so proudly pointed out to him by Frank Monk were in their places.

It took Tom Merry a couple of minutes to take them down. He tied them together in a handy bundle with a piece of cord, and from his pocket he drew a piece of cardboard, which he pinned to the wall in place of the trophies.

The card contained a single inscription in his own handwriting, well-known to Frank Monk and some others of the Grammarians.

"Thanks!—Tom Merry."

He grinned as he thought of the feelings of the Grammarians when they saw it, and turned out the gas.

As he did so, the door opened slightly, and there was a warning whisper from Wally.

"Cave!"

Wally vanished along the passage, only just in time. Tom Merry hesitated, the bundle of stumps in his hand.

Was there time to escape from the dormitory?

Footsteps at the door answered him in the negative.

BOB DOWN!



Wally had only given the warning just in time to save him from running into the Grammarians.

Tom Merry's heart beat very fast for the moment. If he was discovered in the dormitory, with the stumps in his hand, and that card on the wall, the dullest of the Grammarians could not fail to guess the truth.

Yet where to hide?

The Grammarians, if they noticed the stumps were missing—as they could hardly fail to do—would immediately give the alarm and search the dormitory.

The junior was thinking it out when the door opened, and two juniors came into the darkness. The voice of Lane was heard.

"Got a match for the gas, Carboy?"

"Yes, wait a minute. Curious! I thought I saw a light from the dorm as I came along the passage."

"H'm! It's dark enough now."

Tom Merry breathed hard.

As soon as Carboy struck that match, he would be discovered. Not if he could help it! He approached the Grammarians noiselessly in the darkness as they stood by the open door, and made a sudden rush.

"Oh!" roared Lane.

He went reeling over under the rush, and Carboy followed him, reeling and rolling across him on the floor.

Tom Merry, with a suppressed chuckle, ran on. He left the dormitory, and was racing down the passage, before the two startled Grammarians came to their wits.

CHAPTER 9.

A Startling Disappearance!

CARBOY jumped up furiously.

"What—who was that?"

"Blessed if I know!" said Lane, struggling to his feet. "Whatever it was it gave me a jolly hard biff!"

"It couldn't be a burglar!"

"Stuff! Some kid japing us!"

"I'll jape him!" said Carboy, gritting his teeth. "My head's still singing. Wait till I get a light."

Scratch!

"I say, though, it might be that St. Jim's cad," said Lane suddenly. "You know what we found written up in the study. The fellow might have been hiding here waiting for a chance to get away, and we never thought of it."

"My hat! Yes, it's quite possible!"

"Let's have a look."

Carboy lighted the gas.

Their first thought, naturally, was for the trophies of war that had been borne off in triumph from the cricket ground at St. Jim's. If a Saint had penetrated into the Grammarian quarters, his first thought, of course, would have been for them.

Carboy gave a yell.

"Look!"

He pointed to the blank wall. The trophies were gone!

"Gone!" muttered Lane blankly.

"Tom Merry's been here!" yelled Carboy. "Look, that's his message! 'Thanks!—Merry.' The cool beast! It was Tom Merry biffed us over."

"Phew! The cheek of it!"

"We'll have the beast soon; he can't get away!" exclaimed Carboy excitedly. "Let's give the alarm. No; you stay here while I call the fellows."

"Right you are!"

"See that he doesn't cut back along the passage while I'm gone."

"I'll look out."

Later, Frank Monk & Co. rushed downstairs. They burst into the Common-room like a thunderbolt.

They found it in darkness. The gas had been turned out. Frank Monk bumped against the table, and growled:

"Hang it! What ass turned the light out?"

"Haven't you got a match?"

"Yes, I think so!" growled Monk, feeling in his pockets.

"Let's have a light, for goodness' sake! Perhaps Tom Merry has been here and turned the light out," grunted Hanks.

"Stuff! Tom Merry's gone long ago. He must have got over the wall."

"I don't know. He—"

"Well, I do! I tell you he's gone!"

Monk scratched the match and put it to the gas. The Grammarians blinked at one another in the sudden light. There was a roar from Gilson:

"Look!"

On the table was chalked, in huge letters that glistened in the light, a brief but expressive sentence:

"RATS!—TOM MERRY."

THE GEN LIBRARY.—No. 1,316.

The Grammarians could scarcely believe their eyes. They stared at the chalk message on the table; they stared at one another, and they stared round the room.

"My hat!" gasped Frank Monk.

"My giddy aunt!" said Carboy. "Tom Merry's doing us brown, and no mistake!"

There was no sign of Tom Merry. But it was evidently the hero of St. Jim's who had chalked that message there, and turned the gas out in the Grammar School Common-room.

Then Tom Merry was not gone. In spite of the ex-



"Bump him over!" muttered Tom Merry. The St. Jim's wildly, but four pairs of hands grasped him and

hastive search, he was lingering somewhere about the building. Where? In what corner?

Frank Monk was the first to find his voice.

"Well, this takes the biscuit, I think."

"I told you he'd been here," squeaked Hanks.

"There's no doubt about it," said Carboy. "It's Tom Merry, or his ghost."

"But how—where—" Frank Monk broke off helplessly.

"Of course, this is a jape on us, in return for our raid."

"And we're getting nicely done," remarked Lane gloomily. "It's a regular triumph for Tom Merry. How the St. Jim's cads will chuckle when they hear of it!"

"By Jove! I think I can see them."

"They won't chuckle if we catch Tom Merry—and Tom Merry won't, either," said Monk grimly. "We'll smother

him with soot, and send him back to St. Jim's like a chimney sweep. We'll make him sing small."

"If we catch him!" sneered Gilson. "We haven't caught him yet."

Monk snapped his teeth.

"We must catch him. He won't be far away. This must have been chalked here while we were in the quad searching for him. He's in the House."

"My word, what a nerve."

"But where?" said Lane helplessly. "We've searched everywhere—everywhere!"

"I don't know. There's the box-room—and the garrets."



ed at the Grammar School master. He struck out at them
the ground." "Hake! Help me!" he yelled.

There are a good many odd corners where the bounder might hide himself."

"Shall we begin again?"

"Yes, rather; and make it a bit more thorough this time."

Monk smudged out the chalk words on the table. The Grammarians were getting decidedly angry by this time, and they were very anxious to get hold of Tom Merry. They were somewhat fagged with the search, but they renewed it with zest.

Monk, Lane, and Carboy ascended to the garrets—several small rooms at the top of a narrow stair that were only used for lumber. There was a door on the staircase, which shut the garrets off from the rest of the House. Through the garrets the three hunted in vain, while their comrades were searching below.

"Oh rats!" exclaimed Monk at last. "He's not here. I'm jolly dusty!"

"No trace of the beast here!"

"Let's get down and see what the other fellows are doing."

Three exasperated juniors descended the stairs. They were more exasperated still when they reached the door at the foot of the little staircase. It was closed, and did not open to Frank Monk's hand.

"Hallo! What's wrong with this?"

"It's jammed, I suppose. Give it a shove!"

"It's fast!"

They pushed the door violently, but the truth quickly dawned upon them—it was locked on the other side.

"Hang! This is one of the chaps larking with us!"

"I'll give the larker a jolly good thick ear when I get near him!" growled Carboy. "This isn't the time for jokes! Blow the door!"

Monk thumped fiercely on the panels.

"Open this door, you duffers!"

There was a light laugh on the other side.

Frank Monk started. He thought he knew that laugh.

"Who's that?" he shouted.

"Ha, ha, ha! Hear me smile!"

"Tom Merry!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Grammarians looked at one another aghast. It was a "nerve" such as astounded them. While they were hunting for Tom Merry—while a couple of score of exasperated Grammarians were hunting for him—the junior from St. Jim's had ventured out into the open and locked them up on the garret stairs.

Now he was standing on the other side of the door. There were two inches of strong wood between them, and they could neither see nor get at him. But they could hear his merry laugh.

"My word!" muttered Monk. "This prances off with the giddy Peek Frean, and no mistake!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Open this door, you St. Jim's rotter!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Who's top school now?"

"We are!" yelled Monk.

"Who's getting the best of this?"

"We are!" said a voice from Tom Merry's side of the door; and Monk gave a jump as he recognised the tones of D'Arcy minor. "My only Aunt Jane, I should say we are!"

"Young Wally!" he murmured, amazed.

"Two of them!" muttered Carboy.

"Whose triumph is this?" went on Tom Merry cheerfully.

"Ours!" said Wally. "Down with the mouldy old Grammar School! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Frank Monk thumped furiously on the door.

"Rescue!" he bawled. "Rescue, Grammar School! St. Jim's cads! Rescue!"

A sound of rapidly receding footsteps was heard. Tom Merry was gone.

Frank Monk, Lane, and Carboy continued to thump and yell, and at last the noise brought several Grammarians to the scene.

Gilson opened the door, and three furious juniors burst out into the passage.

Gilson stared at them in wonder.

"How on earth did you manage to lock yourselves up there?" he demanded.

"You utter ass!" yelled Monk. "It was Tom Merry!"

"Tom Merry?"

"Yes. He locked us up, and then jawed us through the door."

"My hat!"

"It can't be!" grunted Hanks. "We've been on the stairs down there, or in the passages, all the time. Where could he have got to?"

"I suppose he's cut out into the dorm."

"There's a dozen fellows searching the dorm this minute."

"Well, I don't know where he is, but he was here. Why, look!"

Frank Monk pointed to the door. There were words chalked on it for all to read:

"Done again—TOM MERRY!"

"My only hat!"

"It's—it's magic," gasped Hanks—"that's what it is! I tell you the fellow hasn't been here! It's magic!"

"Don't be an ass!" grunted Monk.

"Then how did he get away?"

"Blessed if I know."

There was a sudden shout down the passage.

"This way! Come here!"

"Hallo! Have they got him?"
And the Grammarians rushed off excitedly in the direction of the shout.

CHAPTER 10.

A Shock for the Jimson Family!

"**W**HAT is it?"
"Where is he?"
"Who was it yelled?"
"Young Wilkinson II."
"What did you yell for, you young ass?"
"I've seen him!" gasped Wilkinson II.
"Seen him!"

It was a general shout, and the eager Grammarians gathered round Wilkinson II. in a compact crowd, breathless for information. Little Secundus had never felt himself of so much importance before. Unconsciously an air of consequence grew upon him, which was promptly quashed by Frank Monk. He took a firm grip upon the ear of Wilkinson II.

"You've seen him—Tom Merry?"
"I—I suppose so."
"You suppose so." Monk gave a snort. "I suppose you know Tom Merry by sight?"
"Yes; but—"
"But what, you stuttering young duffer?" shouted Lane.
"Shut up, Laney! Let him speak!"
"It was so dark," stammered Wilkinson. "The gas had been turned out here on the stairs, you see."
"It must have been Tom Merry turned it out."
"Of course."
"Go on, Wilky!"

"Well, I was coming upstairs in the dark and I just caught sight of a chap who was chalking something on the wall here. I thought at once it was the St. Jim's kid, and I collared him and yelled."

"Good for you!"
"Then he bumped me over on the stairs, and sloped," said Wilkinson II. "He cut into the senior passage."

There was a rush of juniors in that direction. Others struck matches. The gas jet on the stairs was relighted, and they looked at the chalking Wilkinson averred he had seen the shadowy form engaged upon in the dimness.

The chalked letters were very crude, as was natural, considering that they had been done almost in darkness. But they were quite legible.

"St. Jim's is top school! More rats!—TOM MERRY!"

Frank Monk almost gasped with rage.

"St. Jim's is top school, is it?" he said. "Wait till we get hold of the boulder! I'll give him more rats!"

"He can't get away," said Carboy, with a grin. "We left five or six fellows on the watch at the other end of the senior passage, you know. He can't have got past them."

"Phew! We've got him in a trap this time! Cut along, and warn them to be on their guard."

"Right you are!"

Carboy dashed along the passage. The lights had been turned out there. The progress of Tom Merry seemed to be marked by extinguished gas jets.

The watchers were still on guard where Frank Monk had left them; in fact, they were increased in number, for Jimson major, the new boy, was with them, chatting with them, and apparently helping them keep watch. He blinked through his spectacles at Carboy.

"Has anybody passed this way?" demanded Carboy.

"No!" said Jimson major. "What's the trouble?"

"Tom Merry dodged into the passage. Young Wilkinson II. saw him."

"Phew!"

"He hasn't come by here," said Brown. "We've been on the watch all the time. He must have cut into one of the senior studies."

"We'll jolly soon have him out!"

Carboy reported to Monk. The gas jet was relighted in the passage, and it revealed the fact that there was no stranger there. It was clear to Monk & Co. that the fugitive must have dodged into a study.

"We'll take each in turn, and search the lot till we find him," said Frank Monk determinedly.

Lane looked a little doubtful.

"What are the seniors likely to say?"

"Blow the seniors!" said Gilson.

"That's all very well; but we don't want the order of the boot."

"Well, we can search the empty studies," said Monk, after a moment's thought, "and just ask the others. Tom Merry can't have hidden himself in a study that had anybody in it."

"True!"

"Two of you to each study, and buck up!" directed Frank Monk.

And the studies were searched.

The rooms that happened to be occupied by Grammar School seniors afforded the hunters various receptions. At some they were civilly answered, and at others they were shouted at and told to clear out. But the mere fact that a study was occupied was sufficient evidence that Tom Merry was not there.

The empty studies were rigidly searched. Not a corner where a dog or a cat could have hidden himself was left unsearched. But no sign was discovered of the elusive Tom Merry.

Hake's study was last, and Monk tapped at the door with some uneasiness. Hake—especially in the humour he was in that evening—was not a pleasant individual to beard in his den. But there was no help for it. The search had to be completed.

Hake scowled savagely as Frank Monk entered, with the spectacles of Jimson major and Jimson minor glimmering over his shoulders. Jimson minimus was behind with the rest of the hunters.

"What do you brats want?" demanded Hake.

"Nothing; only—"

"Then get out!"

"We've come to look for a chap."

"He's not here! Clear out!"

"Nobody dodged into this study?"

"Nobody!"

"Oh, all right! No need to be huffy about it," said Monk, looking round the study, with a grin.

Hake had tipped the servants to set his study in order as much as possible, but they could not mend the looking-glass or the panes of the bookcase, or the broken clock.

The senior's study looked a complete wreck.

Hake picked up a cushion as the juniors turned to the door.

Jimson major reeled forward, and fell upon his hands and knees as the cushion, fiercely hurled, struck him on the back between the shoulders.

"Now get out of my study!" said Hake savagely.

Jimson major was on his feet in a second. His hand grasped the cushion that had bowled him over.

"Certainly!" he said.

And his hand went up with the cushion on it. Hake sprang to his feet.

"Don't you dare to—Ow!"

Biff!

The cushion flew and caught Hake on the chest and bowled him over like a ninepin. He crashed down on the hearthrug, and the juniors crowded out of the study, chuckling.

Hake rushed out of the study the next moment, red with rage. The three Jimsons lined up, shoulder to shoulder, with clenched fists.

"Looking for trouble?" asked Jimson major pleasantly. "We haven't any red-hot poker handy, but my knuckles are at your service."

Hake glared at them, clenching his hands, but the three seemed a little too formidable to tackle at once, and again he had to postpone his vengeance. With a grunt he retreated into his study, and slammed the door.

"Hake's getting quite tame," grinned Carboy. "You three fellows seem to know how to handle him, though if you get through the night without being skinned, I shall be surprised."

Frank Monk wrinkled his brows.

"Talk about the 'Mystery of the Yellow Room'!" he exclaimed. "It's not in it with this! Where did Tom Merry get to?"

"Don't ask me conundrums!"

"The passage was watched at both ends, and he didn't dodge into any of the studies. Then where is he?"

The Grammarians looked at one another almost in awe. It was a complete puzzle, so utterly baffling as almost to smack of the supernatural. No mystery they had ever heard of in a detective story was anything like it. Where was Tom Merry?

The juniors, utterly unable to grasp the problem, moved about aimlessly, still searching for the mysteriously vanishing junior of St. Jim's.

Jimson major, minor, and minimus sauntered away down the big staircase, and out of sight of the Grammar School juniors they indulged in a quiet chuckle.

"The game's growing hot," murmured Tom Merry. "We are giving the Grammar innocents a high old time."

"My only Aunt Jane!" murmured Wally. "We are—we are!"

"Where is Tom Merry?" chuckled Kerr. "Oh, my hat! What will Frank Monk say when he learns the facts?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Hallo!" exclaimed Jimson major suddenly. "What's that?"

The door of the Hall below the staircase had been opened. The voice of Mr. Slinger could be heard speaking in the Hall, but the three juniors had not paid any particular attention to it.

But the voice that answered Mr. Slinger struck the three at once—struck them, so to speak, all of a heap!

For they knew the voice.

It said:

"If you, please, my name is Fwedewick Wobinson, and I am the new page."

Jimson major, minor, and minimus gazed at one another in horror. One name fell in a dismayed whisper from their lips:

"Gussy!"

CHAPTER 11.

Not Quite a Success!

MR. SLINGER gazed at the boy before him in astonishment.

He was not in a good temper, especially as he was busy with examination papers, when he was called out by the arrival of this singular youth.

It appeared to Mr. Slinger that Dr. Monk had neglected to inform him of many things which should have been mentioned before the headmaster went away.

First there was the arrival of the Jimsons, of which he had known nothing till he had received the telegram, followed by the arrival of the new boys.

Now here was apparently a new page, whom Dr. Monk had caused to call, without giving Mr. Slinger the slightest hint that he was coming.

And such a page!

Mr. Slinger had seen all sorts of pages, boot-boys, and other boys in his time, but he had never seen anything quite like this before.

The fellow was quaint in the face, to say the least of it, and his clothes fitted him as badly as it was possible for clothes to fit.

But his voice!

Mr. Slinger had never heard a youth in service speak with a full-blown Oxonian accent before; but he had that curious experience now.

He gazed at the page, who returned his gaze calmly.

"You are Mr. Slingah, I suppose?" said the new page. "I trust that I shall give you satisfaction, my deah sir. As I have remarked, my name is Fwedewick Wobinson, and I am the—"

"Dear me!" gasped Mr. Slinger.

"If I can see Dr. Monk, my deah sir—"

"Dr. Monk is absent."

"Ah, that is wathah unfortunate. Howevah, I have no doubt that I shall be able to awwange satisfactorily with you."

"Bless my soul!"

"I am looking for a posish as a page—a job. I believe it is called," went on the stranger. "I have observed the duties of the posish, and I wathah think I can cawwy them out satisfactorily. I shall be vewy happy to twy."

"This is most extraordinary!"

"Not at all, deah boy—I mean, deah sir. I—"

"I do not understand this."

"Pway what is it that is beyond your undahstandin', sir? I shall be vewy happy to explain."

"Who are you?"

"I am Fwedewick Wobinson, and—"

"Boy!"

"Yaas, sir!"

"What does this—this masquerade mean?" demanded Mr. Slinger fiercely. "You are no page."

"Weally, Mr. Slingah—"

"Do you think you can deceive me, boy?"

"I weally trust that you do not suspect me of any intention to deceive, Mr. Slingah. I should wegard such a course with uttah contempt."

"You are not what you pretend to be!"

"Weally, my deah sir—"

"You are not a page."

"I am a page at the pwesent moment."

"Your name is not Robinson!"

"My name at the pwesent moment is Fwedewick Wobinson," said the swell of St. Jim's, rather hampered by his impersonations by his determination not to tell an untruth. "There is no need to inqulah furthah."

Mr. Slinger stamped his foot.

"But I shall inquire further!" he almost shouted. "This

is some impudent joke, unless it is the attempt of a criminal to get into the House for the purpose of robbery."

"Bai Jove!"

"Yes, robbery!" shouted Mr. Slinger.

"Wobbewy! Weally, Mr. Slingah—"

"Who are you?"

"Fwedewick Wobinson!"

"I will telephone for the police!" said Mr. Slinger, greatly incensed.

"Bai Jove!"

Naturally enough, the strange scene had drawn the Grammarians to the spot, and they had approached as near as they dared to the acid-tempered Mr. Slinger.

And naturally, too, Frank Monk & Co. recognised the beautiful tones and charming accent of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the swell of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's.

They gazed at one another in wonder.

There was no doubt at all that it was D'Arcy. He certainly wasn't what he pretended to be, and there was no doubt as to who he really was. The Grammarians were awe-stricken at the cheek of it.

"The nerve!" said Monk, in a low voice. "Coming here in disguise!"

"My hat!" said Carboy. "Perhaps he's been around here doing those tricks we've been putting down to Tom Merry!" Monk shook his head.

"No; he's only just arrived. Tom Merry's about here somewhere—and—"

"This ass has come to see how he's getting on," grinned Monk. "This is Gussy's idea of a disguise."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I never thought he'd have the nerve! It's amazing!"

"It is, by George!" said Lane. "Slinger hasn't an idea who he is. Thinks he's a giddy burglar!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It won't be a joke for Gussy if he gets arrested."

Mr. Slinger was looking very much incensed. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was at a loss. He had hoped to be taken on as a new page without difficulty, or too much inquiry, but the scheme was not working out as he had wished. It struck him that there might be some slight detail in which he was not keeping up the character.

Mr. Slinger's threat of telephoning for the police flabbergasted Arthur Augustus.

"Weally, my deah sir, there is no necessity for that," he said, after a pause of dismay. "If you do not wequiah my services as a page, I shall be pleased to wetiah."

Mr. Slinger smiled grimly.

"You will not retire so easily," he said. "I shall insist upon you giving an account of yourself before you leave this House."

"Weally, my deah sir—"

"Close the door, Monk, and stand there, and see that this boy does not pass you!" said the master sharply.

Frank Monk, with a grimace, went to the door, and stood on guard. D'Arcy fished an eyeglass out of his pocket, jammed it in his eye, and looked at Monk, and then at Mr. Slinger.

The latter gentleman simply gasped. The new page-boy was extraordinary enough, but the addition of the eyeglass took the biscuit, as Blake would have said.

A page-boy with an eyeglass was altogether a new thing to Mr. Slinger, but D'Arcy, finding himself in a fix, was losing his caution. And he never could think clearly, as he had often confided to his chums, without an eyeglass in his eye.

"Dear me!" said Mr. Slinger. "I am beginning to think that the boy is insane."

"Weally, Mr. Slingah, I wegard that wemark as wude in the extweme," said D'Arcy, looking the Grammar School master up and down through the monocle. "You may use your disewation, of course, about engagin' me as a page; but, in any case, I considah that I am entitled to be tweated with pwopah respect."

"Bless my soul!"

"I will now wetiah!"

As a matter of fact, D'Arcy would have been glad at that moment to find himself on the outside of the Grammar School.

"You will not!" said Mr. Slinger coldly. "Unless you immediately give an account of yourself, I shall telephone to Rylecombe Police Station. It looks to me as if you have endeavoured to gain entrance to this House for purposes of robbery."

"I can only wegard that observation as a delibewate insult."

"Will you explain yourself?" roared Mr. Slinger.

"Certainly not. If you were not so gwreatly my seniah, I should give you a feahful thwashin'. Undah the cires, I uttably wefuse to explain myself!"

"Boys, keep an eye on this person, and see that he does

(Continued on page 19.)

NOTES AND NEWS FROM—



Address all letters: The Editor, The GEM, The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

HALLO, chums! I feel that I must draw your attention to the wonderful Big Photo Plates which are being presented with our companion papers—"Magnet," "Modern Boy," and "Ranger," these days. In the case of the "Magnet," the series of photo plates depicts "Marvels of Modern Engineering," whilst "Modern Boy" offers a unique collection of pictures illustrating "Great Adventures." The "Ranger"—the six-story adventure paper—is giving away a series under the general title of "World Records We Are Proud Of." All these photo plates are unique specimens and are well worth collecting. If you are interested—and I think you will be—get a copy of these papers this week. Remember in each of them you will find a superb photo plate. Now for next week's all-star programme of the GEM. In the first place you will find hundred-per-cent value in

"BUNTER AT ST. JIM'S!"

by popular Martin Clifford. Billy Bunter, as most of you know, is the celebrated fat boy of Greyfriars. What's he doing at St. Jim's? Ah! Let Martin Clifford tell you next week. Don't miss this yarn, chaps, it's a winner all the way! Don't miss, either, the next all-thrilling chapters of

"THE SPY-FLYERS!"

Each week this super yarn of the Great War grows more interesting. To miss a single instalment would be much worse than missing your brekker! You can depend on our special column of readers' jokes and Potts' capers in our popular "comic strip" if it's laughs you want! Next week's GEM is the best yet. See that you get your copy!

THE UNEXPLODED SHELL!

During the stirring days of the Great War those mighty dangerous things, labelled shells, performed all manner of funny tricks when they left the muzzles of the big guns. Not all of them "went off." In fact, years and years after the last gun was fired, people in the various countries which were ravaged by the War have dug up live shells in their back gardens and farms! But one of the strangest results of a shell which failed to explode came to light not long ago in the Egyptian desert. A highly-placed officer was riding his mule across the illimitable stretch of sand when suddenly, right under him, there was an almighty explosion. The mule was killed on the spot, but the officer, fortunately, escaped. How it happened was this way. The hard hoof of the mule had struck against the detonator of a shell which was buried in the sand, and so "touched off" the high explosive!

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APRIL FOOL?

We are in the month of May, but I must quote you the experience of an elderly gentleman on last All Fools' Day. He was walking along when three boys yelled at him something like this: "Hi, sir! You've dropped a ten-shilling note." But the old gent wasn't having any. He had played April Fools' jokes himself in his time. He got on his bus, with the trio of boys still yelling closely behind him. It was the bus conductor who straightened out matters. He saw in the hand of the foremost boy a real ten-shilling note, so he stopped the bus. Then came explanations. The old chap had indeed dropped the ten shillings, and was so pleased at recovering it that he gave the finder a penny!

HOW IT'S DONE IN BARCELONA!

Prisoners in the Barcelona gaol seem to have a fairly easy time of it. Believe it or not, they actually threatened to revolt unless they were allowed the luxury of a daily bath, meals costing a shilling per head instead of the existing ninepence, and, to cap it all, unless they had wireless installed in each cell. What next, we wonder?

FROM BRISBANE!

They had some pretty hefty floods in Brisbane not long ago, but that didn't frighten the shop girls and assistants, who had to get to their business whether it rained or snowed, so to speak. These hardy folk packed their ordinary clothes into suitcases, donned bathing costumes, and set off to work. On their arrival, off came their dripping wet bathing costumes and on went their ordinary clothes. Good wheeze, what?

WHOSE HALFPENNY?

You don't expect to find a halfpenny in an egg when you crack the shell, do you? Yet such an amazing experience befell a Prestatyn woman the other day, when she was about to make a custard. In the centre of the egg was a real halfpenny—dated 1924. Who lays claim to it?

A CAT ON THE PHONE!

Yes, sir! Cats are mighty wise animals. Listen to this. A cat found itself locked in an office in California, and having tried meowing in the ordinary way and failing to attract attention, this super cat promptly knocked over the telephone and meowed into that! Fact! The operator at the exchange reported the matter, with the result that a fellow was sent along to investigate. On arrival he found

the cat sitting on the table beside the overturned telephone, with its whiskers quite near the mouth-piece. Saucy puss!

A CLASS IN THE CLOUDS!

Ten thousand young French children are booked for a novel geography lesson some time during this year. Instead of listening to a master in a stuffy classroom talking about the beauties of the surrounding countryside and following his chalk map on the blackboard, they will be taken up in aeroplanes when geography lesson comes round. By this means they will be able to see the surrounding countryside for themselves at first hand, and at the same time become accustomed to air travel. Not a bad idea for making young folk "air minded." How would you like the educational authorities to give you the chance of a geography lesson like that?

NOW HE'S WILD!

Who is? Why, the armed bandit who stalked into a Chicago fruit shop a month ago and, pulling out his gun, demanded money of the shop owner. The money in the till amounted to twelve shillings, so the "haul" wasn't exactly enough to keep the bandit rich for life. But the joke of the raid lay in the fact that while he was pulling his gun out of his pocket, the bandit pulled out two pounds of his own money. It lay on the floor unheeded—until after the bandit had gone. Then, of course, the fruiterer picked it up. Reckon he wouldn't mind being raided like that every day in the week. He was forced to give up twelve shillings: he picked up forty shillings. Work out his profit for yourselves!

WHAT THE BANDITS MISSED!

Here's another par that would make London's bandits wild, if they chanced to see it. Not long ago two lorries, uncovered, drove through London for ten miles or so without exciting any particular attention. Do you know what those lorries were carrying? Just a little matter of £100,000 between them in the form of silver bullion. There were no special guards—just the driver at the wheel. What the bandits missed!

RUBBER FEET!

He must have been a very nice Duck—the Duck from Michigan about whom this par is written, for when he got frostbite and they had to amputate his feet, somebody suggested he should be given artificial ones! Sounds a crack-brained notion, doesn't it? But the duck in question doesn't think so. Now he's fitted up with special artificial feet made of rubber, and he gets along just as nicely as before.

HITTING THE IVORIES!

I didn't know until the other day that the world's record for non-stop piano playing is now eighty-two hours. A young Derby musician is the record holder. With great determination he decided to knock the old record of seventy-eight hours non-stop playing sideways. And he succeeded! While he banged the ivories his friend chatted to him, and so helped to pass the dreary hours away. But the friend had a spugh time of it. Whether the music was too much for him, or what, I don't know, but he suddenly fell off the platform—and they had to take him to hospital!

YOUR EDITOR.

ST. JIM'S FOR EVER!

(Continued from page 17.)

not escape while I go to the telephone," almost gasped Mr. Slinger.

"I'll look after him, sir," said a squeaky voice, and Jimson major bustled forward.

"Bai Jove!"

"Shut up!" whispered Tom Merry fiercely.

"Yaas, but—"

The three Jimsons took a tight grip on the new page, and held him fast, and a biff on the mouth from Jimson major's shoulder stopped his remarks, unfinished. Mr. Slinger hurried off to the headmaster's study, where the telephone was fixed. He was fully determined to ring up Rylcombe Police Station for a constable to be sent to the Grammar School.

D'Arcy had come there to help Tom Merry & Co., whom he imagined to be in an "awkward posish." He had succeeded in getting into a fearful scrape, and how he was to get out of it was, of course, a question for Tom Merry to solve.

CHAPTER 12.

The Game is Up!

"WEALLY, deah boys—"

"Shut up!"

"Weally—"

"Quiet, ass!" whispered Tom Merry. "Can't you see the Grammar School cads are on the watch, and—"

"Yaas, wathah! But I wish it to be plainly undahstood that undah no cires whatevah can I consent to bein' addresssed as an ass!"

"Come this way!" said Tom Merry loudly. "I say, you chaps, we'll put him into a class-room, so that he can't get away."

"Right-ho!" said Monk. "This way!"

"I wefuse—"

"Come on, you duffer!" It was difficult to make D'Arcy understand, with the grinning Grammarians close around, but Tom Merry whispered: "It's a chance for you. You can skip out of the window. See?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

They hurried the captured swell of St. Jim's into the nearest class-room, and Frank Monk lighted the gas. Jimson major still had hold of the prisoner on one side and his minor on the other.

"Safe enough here, chaps! We'll lock him up!"

"That we won't!" said Frank Monk decidedly. "Look here! You, Jimson, you're taking too much on yourself for a new boy."

"We want to keep him safe, you know."

"No business of a new kid," said Lane. "You shut up!"

"Yes, but—"

"Oh, ring off!" said Carboy. "You Jimsons stand back. We're going to deal with our dear Gussy!"

"Bai Jove!"

The prisoner's exclamation of astonishment was greeted with a roar of laughter from the Grammarians.

The Jimsons exchanged glances of dismay.

"Weally, you wottahs—"

"The game's up, Gussy," grinned Frank Monk. "We knew you by your dulcet tones at once. The game is right up!"

"Rather!" chuckled Carboy. "We've got you! We know Tom Merry's here somewhere, and you've come over to show him up. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Not at all, deah boys! I came in disguise to help him in an awkward posish."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"They came here without my approval, in the first place, and I felt vewy uneasy for them," explained D'Arcy. "As you have somehow guessed my weal identity—"

"Somehow! Ha, ha, ha!"

"I claim to be tweated with the wespsect due to a pwisonah of war, and allowed to wetiah fwom the scene."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I fail to see anything in that wemark to excite laughtah."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pway welaase me, deah boys!"

"My hat!" chuckled Monk. "Cool, to say the least. You're a giddy prisoner of war, Gussy. You're not going to get away quite so easily."

"Weally, Monkey—"

"Tom Merry's here somewhere. He's got some deep dodge of keeping out of our way; and he's been raggung us no end. I suppose you are on to the dodge, whatever it is?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Then what is it?"

D'Arcy released one hand and jammed his eyeglass into his eye. That done, he looked Frank Monk up and down—from his toes to the parting of his hair, and from the parting of his hair to his toes again.

"Weally, Fwank Monk, I pwesume you do not expect me to betway my fwienids?"

"My word! Doesn't he do it well?" grinned Monk. "You ought to go on the stage, Gussy. This is really what comes of singing tenor solos. He wants to like a soldier fall."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My dear ass, we want to know where Tom Merry is. If you don't reveal the dread secret—I believe that's the correct expression—the dread secret, we shall put you to the torture."

"Pway don't wot, deah boy!"

"Here, draw it mild!" said Jimson major.

"You shut up, you new kid!"

"I think we ought to let him go."

"Mind your own business!"

"Look here—"

"After all, we don't want him to be arrested!" grinned Hanks. "That would be rather too thick. And old Slinger's at the telephone."

"That's all right," said Monk. "You can't arrest by telephone, can you? It will take the bobby an hour to get here. You know the pace they move at."

"Yes, I forgot that!"

"Plenty of time for Gussy to get away. We shall have to see that he takes back some sign of our kind regards to St. Jim's. I was thinking of a coat of tar over his chivvy, and glueing his hair to his napper."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I should uttally wefuse to have my hair glued to my nappah!"

"But first we've got to get out of him where Tom Merry and Wally are. We know they're both hero."

"Bai Jove!"

"Oh, rats! You don't know anything!" said Jimson major aggressively. "What you really want is a thick ear, Monkey!"

"Don't you begin rowing now, Jimson. What's your little game?"

"I'll row if I like!" said Jimson major.

Tom Merry was getting desperate. He had no fear that D'Arcy would willingly betray the secret—the swell of St. Jim's was incapable of that—but he felt pretty certain that if the Grammarians questioned him, he would allow it to escape him involuntarily—sooner or later it would pop out like a cork from a bottle—and then the game would be up with a vengeance. If a fight was started, there was a chance that Gussy might get clear in the confusion. That was Tom Merry's idea; but it was not destined to work.

"No, you won't!" said Frank Monk grimly. "We can't bother with you now, Specs. Get out of the way."

"Rats to you, Monkey!"

"Shove him back, you chaps!"

There were at least twenty Grammarians in the class-room. Half a dozen of them closed round Jimson major and hustled him back. The three Jimsons drew closer together.

It looked as if the climax was coming.

Frank Monk turned to D'Arcy again. He was held now by Lane and Carboy. Tom Merry drew a little back with his comrades and whispered to Wally:

"We shall have to run for it in a minute."

Wally nodded gloomily.

"Looks like it. Gussy was bound to mess it up!"

"What's the programme?" muttered Kerr. "Gussy will let the secret out as sure as a gun."

"I think so. Look here, we shall have to cut for it. I was thinking of the window here, but there's too many of the rotters in the room. We shall have to cut into the Hall. You get out first, Wally, and see if you can put the key on the outside of the lock. It will give us a chance."

"Right you are!"

"If they captured the lot of us, the laugh would be against us for ever and ever," murmured Tom Merry. "We should never get over it. They'd have the laugh on their side, and we should be chipped to death at St. Jim's. The fellows would never let us forget it."

"Rather not!"

Wally slid away to the door. No one noticed him; all eyes were on the prisoner, and no one knew or cared what Jimson minimus was doing.

Frank Monk was questioning D'Arcy. The way Tom Merry had contrived to baffle their search was a complete mystery to the Grammarians; but there was some trick in it.

it, Monk knew, and he was pretty certain that D'Arcy knew it all. And he meant to have the information out of Gussy by hook or by crook. The capture of Tom Merry would be a crowning triumph for the Grammarians.

D'Arcy had no intention of revealing the secret.

"You may question me till you are black in the face, deah boys," he remarked. "I shall not betway my friends, bai Jove!"

"Twist his wrists a bit," suggested Gilson.

"You may twist my wrists, if you like, you cad, but I shall not say a beastly word."

"Hold on!" said Monk. "None of your caddish tricks, Gilson!"

"He's got to speak!" said Gilson sulkily.

"Yes; but that's my business, not yours. Stand back! No when, Gussy, we want to know where Tom Merry is."

"Find out, deah boy."

"I suppose—" Monk looked at the queer disguise that rendered Arthur Augustus almost unrecognisable, and a new idea came into his mind. "I suppose he's in a disguise of some sort."

"I can only wepeat my formah wemark—find out!"

"Impossible!" said Carboy. "I don't suppose he could succeed any better than this ass at a disguise. Besides, if he were disguised, he would have to come here as a stranger, and there aren't any strangers about the school."

"That's so, except the new boys."

Frank Monk had no sooner uttered the words than his face changed, and he gave a sudden start. His own words had struck him with peculiar force.

"The new boys!" he repeated. "The new boys!"

"What do you mean?"

"I thought they were a jolly queer set of new boys, and Slinger didn't know any new boys were coming."

"My hat!"

"Bai Jove, Tom Mewwy, the game's up!" said D'Arcy involuntarily. "Wun for it, deah boys! Nevah mind me! Wun like anythin'!"

"That's proof!" roared Frank Monk. "Where are those Jimsons?"

"Collar them!"

And there was a roar of excitement in the room at once.

CHAPTER 13.

A Rush to the Rescue!

JACK BLAKE were a worried look. For a quarter of an hour he had been going to and fro in the School House at St. Jim's, seeking Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, and finding him not.

"Have you seen Gussy?"

That was the question he fired at everyone he met, and everyone replied with a negative monosyllable or a shake of the head.

Herries and Digby didn't know where he was; Lowther and Manners professed complete ignorance. Gore, when asked, said he hoped he had got drowned somewhere. Figgins of the New House had not seen him. Reilly remembered seeing him in the morning, but as Blake had seen him later than that, the information wasn't of much use. Glyn and Noble thought they had heard his voice in Skimpole's study as they passed it, and to Skimpole at last Blake hid himself.

Blake was very uneasy. He knew of Gussy's anxiety about Tom Merry and Kerr, and remembered hearing him suggest that he should go to the Grammar School in disguise to look after them.

It was quite possible that D'Arcy had carried out his intention, and Blake groaned inwardly at the idea. The whole scheme would probably be revealed, and it might end in a triumph for the Grammarians and the downfall of Tom Merry—a never-to-be-forgotten defeat for St. Jim's. D'Arcy's intentions were good, but good intentions were not quite all that were wanted in a matter of so much delicacy.

The chums of the Fourth found Skimpole in his study. He was busy with a huge volume of Professor von Dummkopf, making voluminous extracts for an article he intended writing for "Tom Merry's Weekly."

"Have you seen Gussy?" demanded Blake.

"Gussy!" said Skimpole vaguely, his mind still deep in Determinism. "Gussy! Oh, ah—yes! Not since the last time!"

Blake snorted.

"When was the last time, fathead?"

"He came in here to borrow my spectacles," explained Skimpole. "It was for purposes of disguise; but they did not suit him."

"Disguise!" exclaimed Blake.

"Er—perhaps I ought not to inform you."

"How long has he been gone?" yelled Blake.

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"Half an hour, I think."

"My only hat!"

Blake rushed out of the study and joined his chums. His call brought them together in a moment.

"Found him?" asked Digby.

"No; he's been disguising himself, and he's gone!"

"Phew!"

"I'll run and get Towser!" exclaimed Herries.

"Towser! What on earth do you want with Towser?"

"To track him down."

"Rats! Blow Towser! Towser can eat coke! It's pretty certain where the giddy ass has gone to. He's gone to the Grammar School to look after Tom Merry and Kerr."

"Then all the fat's in the fire!"

"Yes. Hallo, Dane! Have you seen Gussy?"

"Yes, rather; he gave me a message for you," said Dane, coming along the passage. "He's rigged himself up in some of Binks' clothes, and he's gone to the Grammar School disguised as a bootboy."

"My hat! I thought as much!"

"He thinks Tom Merry will be in an awkward position by this time, and he's gone to help him," explained Dane, grinning.

"The young ass! He'll give the whole show away. How long is it since he left the school?" exclaimed Blake excitedly.

"Ten minutes."

"Oh blow! He's at the Grammar School by now, then, if he hurried."

"But he never does hurry," suggested Digby. "If we get after him—"

"Right!" said Blake hurriedly. "Give the word to some of the fellows, Dig, and bring them along, in case there's trouble with the Grammar School cads. I'll cut after Gussy now."

"Gates are locked!"

"Haven't you ever climbed a wall?"

"There'll be a row if we're missed—a crowd of us."

"Bring a dozen, and let there be a row!" said Blake.

And he snatched his cap and rushed off.

There was nothing for Dig to do but to obey. Word was passed that fellows were wanted for a rescue, and there was a gathering at once. A rescue it certainly would have to be, in the general opinion. D'Arcy's disguise was not likely to pass muster in the Grammar School; and if he was discovered, the discovery of the pretended newsboys was very likely to follow.

Lowther and Manners, Digby and Herries, with Glyn and Clifton Dane and Noble, and Reilly and Kerruish, rushed into the dusty quad, and were soon joined by Figgins & Co. of the New House. Two Third-Formers also joined the party—Jameson and Gibson—and were greeted with a growl from Fourth Form and Shell fellows.

"You kids cut off!" said Lowther.

"Rats!" said Jameson. "I've heard what Dane said—Gussy's gone there to mess it up!"

"That's no business of yours!" said Digby. "Cut off, or you'll get a thick ear!"

"Rats! We are going to look after Wally!"

"Wally!"

"Yes, Wally."

"But young D'Arcy isn't there!"

Jameson chuckled.

"Isn't he? That's all you know!"

"You young rascal!" roared Digby. "Do you mean to say that young Wally has had the cheek to mix himself up with this?"

"Ha, ha, ha! Yes, rather!"

"How did the imp know anything about it?" exclaimed Figgins in astonishment.

"Oh, you couldn't pull the wool over the eyes of the Third Form!" said Gibson contemptuously. "We knew all along!"

"The dickens you did!"

"And so Wally has gone to the Grammar School, has he?" said Manners.

"Yes, rather—as Jimson minimus."

"My only hat!"

There was no time to slay the Third-Formers just then, and they were allowed to follow.

The whole crowd scrambled over the wall by the slanting oak, Fatty Wynn gasping and grunting very much with his exertion.

Then they went down the road at a spanking pace on the track of Jack Blake, who was well ahead by this time.

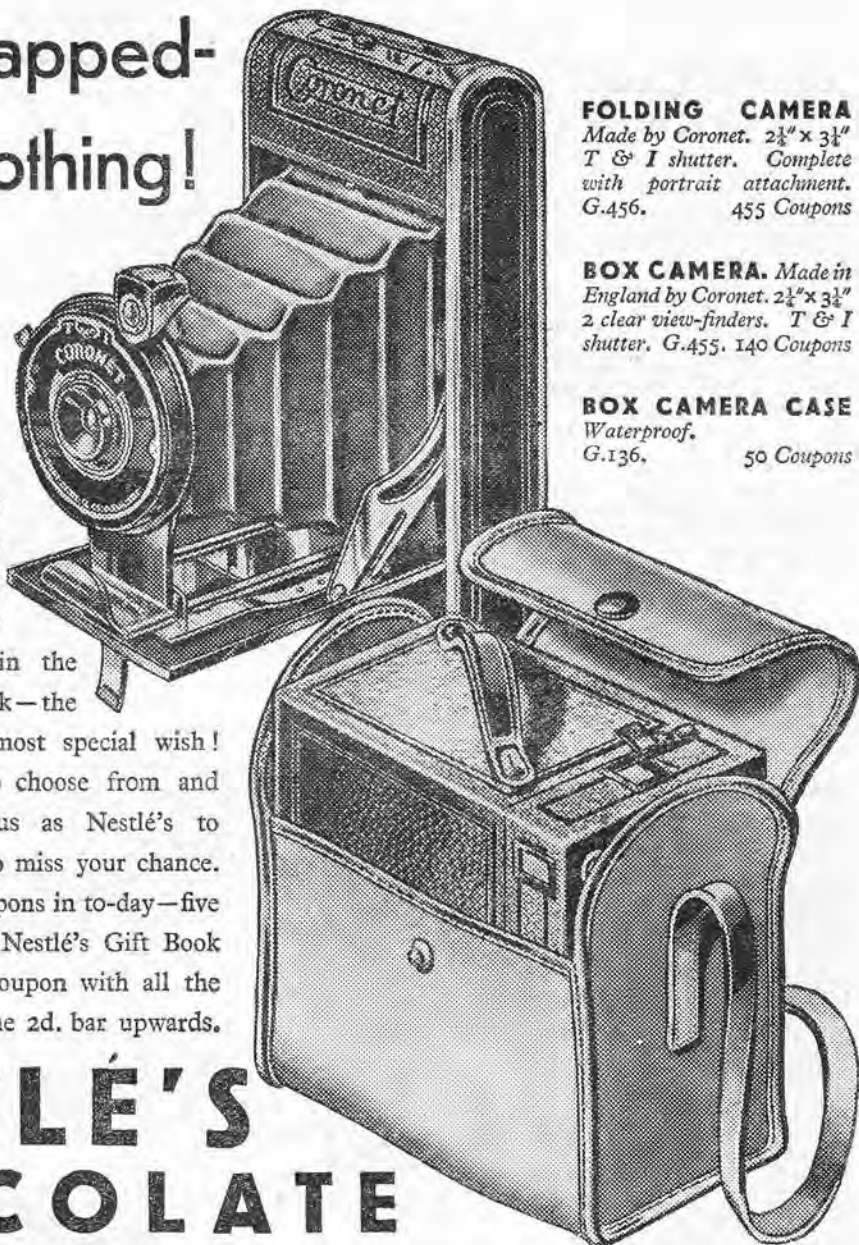
They did not sight Blake till the gates of the Grammar School, grim and dark, rose in the dimness of the evening before them.

(Continued on page 22.)

To be snapped-
up for nothing!

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Then a shadowy figure came into view from the darkness of the wall.

"Seen anything of him?" gasped Figgins.

"No; if he came here he must have gone in."

It was Blake's voice.

"He came here right enough," said Clifton Dane. "I watched him out of sight. He was coming straight in this direction, and he knew the way well enough."

"Then he's inside the Grammar School!"

"Looks like it."

"What's to be done?"

The juniors of St. Jim's looked at the high gates and at the long dark wall with the branches of the trees showing over it. Blake stepped closer to the wall.

"I'm going in to see what's up."

"Phew! It's risky!"

"I don't care! Give me a bunk up!"

Figgins, the tallest of the party, gave Jack Blake the required bunk, and the School House junior scrambled upon the wall.

As he did so there was a shout within the walls and a sound of running feet.

CHAPTER 14. Neck or Nothing!

"COLLAR them!"

"Collar the new kids!"

"It's Tom Merry!"

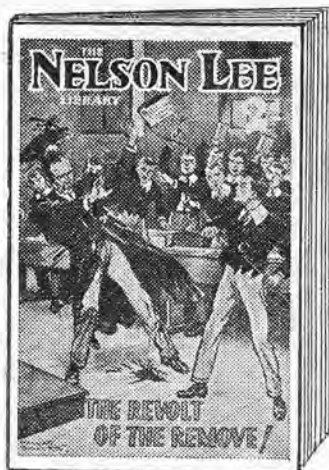
"Collar him!"

It was a babel of yells that broke out in the Grammar School class-room, and a wild excitement had seized upon the crowd of juniors gathered there under the glimmer of a single gas-burner.

The truth had burst upon the Grammarians like a thunderbolt.

The idea had flashed into Frank Monk's brain, but even to him it seemed hardly credible, so unheard of, that he could hardly have believed it but for the incautious words uttered by Arthur Augustus.

D'Arcy meant all for the best when he told Tom Merry to run and save himself; but his words gave the show away completely.



Down with the Tyrant!

Up, the Remove! Nipper & Co. and his merry men are fed-up with their tyrannical new Housemaster—and they show it in no half-hearted fashion. Mr. Hunter has asked for trouble and he gets it, as will be seen in the small reproduction of the NELSON LEE cover above. This thrilling story of the chums of St. Frank's will grip your interest from first to last. It's entitled "The Revolt of the Remove!" and appears in to-day's sparkling number of

NELSON LEE

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After that, the most startled and amazed of the Grammarians could not doubt.

They had been taken in by the St. Jim's juniors by a stupendous jape, the like of which had never before come within their experience.

If the Saints got away, the laugh would be against the Grammar School, and the laugh would be loud and long.

Monk could picture Tom Merry & Co. relating their adventures in the Grammar School to grinning circles at St. Jim's.

"Collar him!" roared Monk.

At any cost Tom Merry must be captured!

That was the only way the Grammarians could hope to save themselves from endless ridicule.

If Tom Merry were captured and made an example of the laugh would be against St. Jim's, after all.

But Tom Merry was quick to act.

He was expecting the revelations, as we know, and he had whispered his plans to Kerr. Wally was outside the door, waiting in the passage, and he had changed the key, as Tom Merry had directed him.

As the shout burst from Frank Monk, and the Grammarians scrambled wildly round to collar the Jimsons amid a babel of exclamations, Tom Merry made a dash for the gas. He was too quick for his intentions to be guessed or frustrated.

His hand was on the burner, and in a second the gas was turned out and the great room plunged in darkness.

There was a fresh burst of yells.

"Look out!"

"He's escaping!"

"Collar him!"

Tom Merry felt hands on him in the darkness. He had discarded his spectacles, as had Kerr and Wally—disguise was useless now, and the glasses might have been dangerous with wild hitting going on in the darkness.

Tom Merry hit out right and left.

It was no time to stand upon ceremony—it was neck or nothing! Straight from the shoulder came Tom's doughty blows, and Grammarians reeled from him with gasps of pain.

Tom Merry tore himself loose in a twinkling.

At the same moment that Tom had rushed to the gas, Kerr had sprung towards Arthur Augustus.

He grasped Gussy by the shoulders as the lights went out, and wrenched him away from the relaxed grasp of the startled Carboy and Lane.

Arthur Augustus, startled himself, gave a yell.

"Ow! You wuff ass! You're hurtin' me!"

"Come on!"

"Yaas, but—"

"Cut for it, you ass! The door, quick!"

"I wufuse to be called an ass!"

Kerr did not speak again—there was hardly time for an argument, so he suppressed his thoughts till a more favourable opportunity. Grasping D'Arcy by the arm, he piloted him swiftly to the door.

Tom Merry was dashing in the same direction after turning out the gas.

It all passed in a few seconds. They reached the door while the Grammarians were wildly scrambling to and fro in the dark class-room.

There was a glimmer of light at the doorway from the Hall, and the figures were seen as they fitted out. There was a roar.

"They're off!"

"After them!"

Monk and Gilson and Lane were close on the track. As they rushed through the doorway, however, four St. Jim's juniors lined up there, and sent them reeling into the room again with terrific right-handers.

The Grammar School juniors rolled on the floor, and several more close behind rolled over them, and Tom Merry slammed the door shut.

In a second Carboy had hold of the handle on the inside, and was dragging on it. Tom exerted all his strength to keep the door fast.

"Quick!" he gasped. "The lock!"

Wally was already turning the key.

Click!

That click warned the Grammarians what had happened, and they kicked furiously at the door and yelled for rescue.

"The window!" gasped Monk. "We may cut them off yet!"

Some of the Grammarians rushed to the window. Others continued to hammer on the door to attract attention. In their excitement they forgot all about the results that might accrue from alarming masters and prefects. They hammered and yelled. Tom Merry & Co. made for the door into the quadrangle.

They met Mr. Slinger on the way.

[The Grammar School master, having telephoned to the

police station at Rylcombe, and received the assurance that a constable would be sent up to the school at once, was returning further to interrogate the prisoner.

His amazement when he saw that same prisoner in full flight across the Hall, accompanied by the three new boys, may be imagined.

"Stop!" he shouted.

They rushed on, and Mr. Slinger threw himself valiantly into their path. Hake was looking out of his study, wondering what the noise was about, and the Grammar School master shouted to him.

"Hake! Help me!"

The senior rushed upon the scene.

There was no time to waste.

"Bump him over!" muttered Tom Merry.

They dashed at the Grammar School master. He struck at them wildly, hardly knowing what he was doing in his astonishment and alarm; but four pairs of hands grasped him, and he was bumped on the ground.

They left him in a sitting posture, gazing after them with an expression of bewilderment that was almost idiotic. Hake rushed after them, and grasped Tom Merry by the shoulder.

"Now, then, Jimson—"

He got no further.

Kerr turned upon him and tripped him up, and he rolled on the steps of the red-brick building, and four figures vanished into the darkness.

"Thanks!" gasped Tom Merry. "Thanks, Kerr. He nearly had me."

There was a shout from the direction of the class-room window. Several dusky figures were dropping from it, and one of them had rolled over.

"They're after us!" muttered Tom Merry. "We shall have to get over the wall somehow."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Follow me!"

And Tom Merry dashed away towards the tree close to the wall, in the branches of which he had hidden the recaptured cricket stumps, the trophies of war.

There was a yell from the darkness towards the house.

"After them!"

"Search the quad!"

Tom Merry chuckled breathlessly.

"This way! I'll give you a bunk up, Gussy! Quick!"

"Wats! It is only pwopah for the wescuah to stay to the last! I will give you a bunk up, Tom Merry!"

"Here, Wally, you first, then!"

Wally clambered on the wall, helped up by Tom Merry's strong arms. Kerr followed. He would quite willingly have been last up, but he was too sensible to start arguing at such a moment.

"Now, then, up with you!"

"I pwefer to wemain to the last, deah boy!"

"Ass! You're going first!"

"I wefuse to be called an ass, and I uttably and absolutely decline to go first. The pwopah place for a D'Arcy is in the post of dangah!"

"You shrieking idiot—"

"I should be sowwy to have to thwash you at such a moment, Tom Mewwy—"

"Oh, why didn't somebody suffocate you years ago?" murmured the exasperated leader of the Shell. "Will you go up?"

"Aftah you, deah boy!"

"Here come the Grammar cads—they've heard us."

"Yaas, wathah! Pway huvwwy!"

There was no help for it. Tom Merry yielded the point and scrambled up the wall with D'Arcy's assistance. There was a yell from behind.

"Here they are!"

"They're getting over the wall!"

"Quick, collar them!"

And there was a wild rush of feet.

"Quick, Gussy!" panted Tom Merry, his chest on the wall, and reaching down a helping hand for the swell of St. Jim's.

"No time, deah boy! Sowwy!"

It was true enough.

A crowd of Grammarians were rushing up, and if Arthur Augustus had climbed up his ankles would have been grasped by a dozen hands.

Obstinate as he was, the swell of St. Jim's was no fool. He dodged along the wall in the darkness, and Tom Merry tried to attract the attention of the Grammarians to himself by shouting:

"Ha, ha, ha! Done again, Monkey!"

The ruse succeeded for a moment. The Grammarians, with a yell, brought up against the wall under the three juniors, whose forms showed dimly in the gloom above. Monk made a spring at the wall, and received a tap on the nose from Kerr and dropped into a flower-bed with a squashy bump.

But a sound of scraping on the wall in the distance caught the keen eyes of Carboy, and he shouted in alarm.

"There's another of them!"

"After him!"

And off went the Grammarians in a new direction.

Tom Merry gave a groan.

"That ass, Gussy! He's caught!"

But Arthur Augustus was not caught yet. He had tried to climb the wall and failed, and as the enemy rushed in his direction he ran along the wall again. The shouting juniors were close on his track, and some of them had lights now.

"There he is!"

It was Carboy's voice close behind.

It was neck or nothing! D'Arcy made a desperate bound at the wall and grasped the top and hung there, too exhausted by the spring to drag himself over it.

"Bai Jove, I'm done!"

"Hold on, kid!"

A form loomed up on the wall close by him; someone who had climbed up from outside.

D'Arcy gasped. He knew the voice.

"Blake!"

"Yes, rather, ass!"

"I—I wefuse to—to—"

"Ha, ha, ha! Come on!"

Jack Blake grasped D'Arcy by the collar and dragged him, half-choked, upon the wall, and the clutch of Carboy below missed his ankle by an inch!

CHAPTER 15.

All Serene!

TOM MERRY sat on the wall, gasping. A yell of disappointment from the Grammarians told him that D'Arcy had somehow managed to get to the top of the wall and was safe for the moment.

"My only hat, that was a close shave!"

"It was!" panted Kerr. "It were!"

"My only Aunt Jane, I don't want to go through a closer one!" murmured Wally. "But how has that asinine brother of mine got over the wall?"

"Blessed if I know!"

"Are you all wight, deah boys?"

It was D'Arcy's voice from the road.

A crowd of dim figures loomed up there in the dimness of the night, Arthur Augustus among them. Tom Merry looked down from the wall in astonishment.

"Why don't you come down?" shouted Blake to Tom Merry, as Kerr and Wally dropped into the road. "I can hear some of the Grammar School cads getting over the wall."

"Wait a minute!"

"What are you fumbling about in that tree for?"

"The trophies, ass!"

"The—the what?"

"The trophies! We've recaptured them!"

"Great Scott! The stumps they collared from us—you've got them?"

"Yes, rather!"

A bundle clattered on the ground at Blake's feet so suddenly that he gave a jump.

"Wh-wh-what's that?"

"The trophies of victory, you duffer!"

"Good!" said Monty Lowther, picking up the bundle.

"This is a triumph, and no mistake! Now, the sooner we get back to St. Jim's the better!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

There was a shout from the gloom.

"There they are!"

It was Frank Monk's voice.

Mr. Slinger, fully believing that a burglary had been designed at the Grammar School, and that the pretended new boys were the accomplices of the burglars, had ordered the porter to open the gates, and given the boys free leave to pursue the fugitives. He meant the three Jimsons to give an account of themselves.

Frank Monk was far from enlightening him as to the true state of affairs. Mr. Slinger would certainly have called on Dr. Holmes at St. Jim's, and there would have been trouble for Tom Merry & Co. While the gates were being opened, and a crowd of impatient Grammarians chafed there, Monk and several of the more active climbed the wall and dropped into the road.

They discerned the figures of the St. Jim's juniors in the gloom and came dashing up, still with the hope of capturing Tom Merry.

They knew nothing, of course, of the accession of force to the St. Jim's party; the presence of Blake and the rest was a surprise to them.

They rushed up—five or six of them—and found themselves attacking fifteen or sixteen fellows.

"Sook it to 'em!" shouted Figgins.

"Here, hold on!" gasped Monk. "Cut!"

But it was too late to "cut."

The St. Jim's juniors were round them in a second, and Monk & Co. were bumped over and sprawled in the road, each in the grip of a couple of Saints.

"Got them!"

"Bai Jove, wathah! Monk, deah boy, we've got you!"

"Gr-r-r-r!" mumbled Monk, nearly squashed under the weight of Fatty Wynn. "Gr-r-r-r—"

"Ha, ha, ha! Go easy, Fatty!"

"Well, I'm only holding him!"

"Done you this time, Monkey!" said Tom Merry cheerfully, as Fatty Wynn allowed the hero of the Grammar School to sit up.

"Rats!" grunted Frank.

Tom Merry laughed.

"There's no getting out of it," he remarked. "We've recaptured the trophies. We've given you a run all the afternoon and evening, and you never caught on till Gussy came and gave us away."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"This is where we grin," said Figgins. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the juniors.

Frank Monk wriggled.

"Rescue!" he shouted. "Rescue, Grammar School! They're getting away!"

There was a shout in return from the direction of the gates.

They were open now, and the pursuers were pouring out.

"Time's up!" grinned Tom Merry. "Cut!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Leaving their prisoners in the dust, the juniors of St. Jim's vanished into the darkness.

The Grammarian pursuers came racing up, and collided with Monk & Co., and there were loud exclamations on all sides.

"Got them!" roared Gilson, collaring Frank Monk and dragging him down.

"You ass!" roared Monk.

"Oh, is that you, Monkey?"

"Yes, dummy, fathead! This way! Follow me!"

Monk dashed off in pursuit of the Saints, and the crowd of Grammarians followed him, whooping. But they did not catch the retreating party. Tom Merry & Co. covered the ground quickly, and they were inside the walls of St. Jim's in record time. The Grammarians chased them to the very walls, and then, baffled, retraced their footsteps.

Within the dark quadrangle the juniors heard them go, and chuckled.

"Clean done!" said Figgins. "Well, I for one think that it was a ripping wheeze. We've got the trophies!"

"We have, rather!"

"Yaas, deah boys! Undah the cires, I pwesume you are now disposed to admit that it was fortunate for you that I came to the rescue?"

"Oh, ring off, Gussy! We've got to get in. How are we to get in in this rig?" said Tom Merry. "We shall be questioned."

"Bai Jove!"

"Ha, ha, ha! I should imagine so."

"Hallo! Who's there?"

It was the voice of Kildare of the Sixth.

Tom Merry groaned.

"The skipper!"

"Bowled out!" growled Blake.

Kildare peered at them in the gloom.

"Merry, Kerr, you have returned. What does this mean? Haven't you been on your holiday, after all? And what is the matter with your faces? You look as if— D'Arcy! Is that D'Arcy?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Kildare gave them a grim look.

"You can come up to my study and explain," he said.

And he strode into the School House. And Tom Merry & Co., not without considerable trepidation, followed him to his study.

CHAPTER 11.

Triumph!

TOM MERRY & CO. marched into the study, and stood blinking in the light, and Kildare looked at them.

He tried to look stern, but the sight of Arthur Augustus in page's attire was too much for him.

His face relaxed into a smile; the smile became a grin, and the grin a roar of laughter.

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"Ha, ha, ha! D'Arcy! Is that really D'Arcy?"

"Yaas, wathah, deah boy! I fail to see any cause for wibald laughah, howevah. I think I will go and change my clothes."

"Wait a minute! What have you young rascals been doing?"

The juniors looked at one another dubiously.

The jape they had played off on the Grammarians was a magnificent one, from their point of view, but there was no telling how the head of the Sixth might regard it.

But there was no getting out of an explanation now.

"Pewwaps we had bettah confide the whole mattah to Kildare, deah boys. As a patwiotic Saint, and a sportsman, he is bound to approve."

"I don't know about that," said Kildare; "but certainly you've got to tell me the story, so buck up!"

"It was in this way, deah boy—"

"Oh, ring off, Gussy!" said Blake. "You see, Kildare, we—"

"You explain, Merry," said the captain of St. Jim's quietly.

"Weally, Kildare—"

"Go on, Tom Merry!"

And Tom Merry explained.

Kildare stared with blank amazement at first, and something like incredulity, and when Tom Merry came to an end of his concise narrative, the big Sixth-Former simply gasped.

"My only hat!" he said. "Of all the cheek! Ha, ha, ha! Mr. Slinger must have thought there was a burglary planned."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"You cheeky young beggars! I've never heard of such a thing! If anybody gets to know of this there will be a row!"

"Yes; but you'll keep it dark, Kildare," said Tom Merry, encouraged. "You see, there was no harm in it."

"Besides, I rescued them before anything could happen," said Arthur Augustus. "It was all wight as soon as I came upon the scene."

"Ha, ha, ha!" Kildare laughed till the tears rolled down his cheeks. "I've never heard anything like it. You young rascals! I believe I ought to give you a jolly good licking all round, but I won't. You deserve to get off for your cheek. Get out!"

They promptly got out. Kildare went along to Darrell's study to tell him the story, and the two seniors roared over it.

The next morning it was common property in the Lower Forms at St. Jim's, and the Saints chatted and chuckled over it without end.

The Third Form, of course, made a hero of Wally, attributing the whole success of the adventure to him. While the Fourth Form gave all the credit to Kerr, and the Shell plumped for Tom Merry. But there was one point all Forms were agreed upon, and that was that Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had played the giddy ox. It was in vain that the swell of the School House pointed out that he had rescued the adventurers at the Grammar School. He wasn't listened to.

After school, as Tom Merry came out of the class-room, he was surrounded by an admiring crowd, and whisked off his feet by Noble and Clifton Dane and Bernard Glyn. They hoisted him on their shoulders, and with Blake and Herries and Digby and a crowd of others marching round them, bore him into the quadrangle.

Tom Merry looked down rather dizzily.

"What's the jape?" he asked.

"It's a giddy triumph," said Blake.

"Yaas, wathah! Who's goin' to cawwy me, deah boys?"

"You can carry yourself, Gus."

"As the wescuah of the partay—"

"Ha, ha, ha! Who's going to carry Gussy?" shouted Figgins.

Three or four fellows rushed at D'Arcy and seized him. Arthur Augustus submitted with great complacency, but there was a wild howl as he was plumped down in a sitting posture on the ground, and his silk hat was jammed over his eyes.

"Ow! Wesene! You wottahs!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the juniors.

"I wegard you as beasts!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

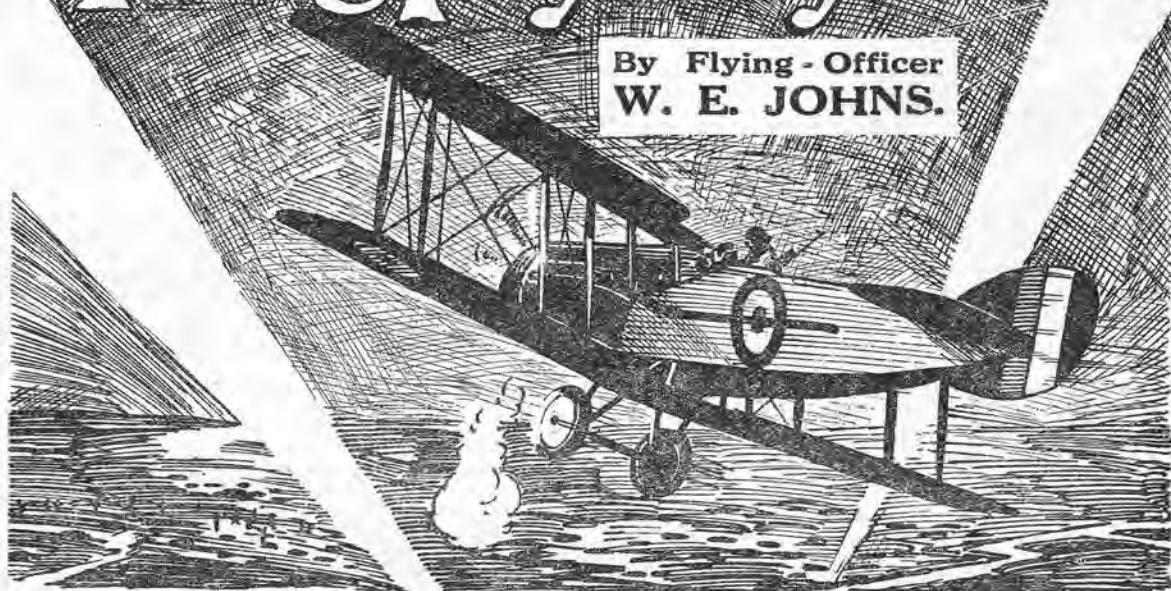
And that was all D'Arcy's share in the triumph. The Shell and the Fourth Form marched round the quad, and Tom Merry was borne in triumph on high, with the recaptured trophies carried before him.

(Look out for laughs in next week's ripping yarn—
"BUNTER AT ST. JIM'S!" The porker of Gregfians comes to see D'Arcy and stays to play cricket—of a sort!)

AMAZING ESPIONAGE SECRET DISCLOSED:

The Spyflyers

By Flying - Officer
W. E. JOHNS.



REX LOVELL and TONY FOSTER are chosen by MAJOR TREVOR for Secret Service work in the air. They discover that CAPTAIN FAIRFAX of the British Intelligence Staff is a famous German spy! While pursuing him in a German plane and wearing German uniforms, Rex and Tony are shot down by a British machine. They reach a German aerodrome at Varne in safety, but every moment they are in danger of discovery!

An Amazing Request!

IT'S all fixed up," said Rex. "We're staying here to dinner at the C.O.'s invitation. Let's take a stroll round the tarmac."

"Well, what do you make of it?" he asked a few minutes later, when they were alone.

"I can't make anything out of it," replied Tony hopelessly. "It beats me altogether; it's fantastic. I know one thing, though—I shall be jolly glad to be out of this; we're in the worst mess we've ever been in. I don't know what Fairfax is playing at. He's deep, that chap, and he's got some scheme on foot, or we should have been in Lille Prison by now. One thing is certain. Fairfax or no Fairfax, this can't go on much longer. It only needs someone who knew Wistmann or Koepler to roll up, and—"

"I wish you'd try to think of something cheerful for a change," broke in Rex. "It's all right at the moment, and that's the main thing. We've got to get a machine by hook or crook, and I've got my eye on that green Rumpler over there—the one those mechanics are working on. The moment they leave her I'm going across to start it up."

"Bah! You don't think you can get away with that!" sneered Tony. "Fairfax is watching us like a cat watching a mouse. There he is, over there now! See him? He's not worrying much. He knows he's got us stone cold where he wants us. The first move we make for a getaway, and it will be a file of men with fixed bayonets for us."

"Well, he can only stop us," said Rex desperately, "and we should know where we were. Sitting still will get us nowhere."

"A move towards that machine will get us somewhere, and quickly," retorted Tony. "It will get us behind the bars of Lille Prison, with nothing to look forward to except a nice little shooting-party before breakfast in the morning. We're being watched, I tell you, and Fairfax isn't the only one."

Rex looked around cautiously.

"You're right," he said briefly. "Fairfax is watching us, and so is that fellow over there on the left. He's pretending to be tinkering with that engine, but he's got his eye on us all the time. Well, I'm not going to hang about here doing nothing. If it's coming, let's get it over! I'm sorry I've

landed you in this mess, old lad, but"—he shrugged his shoulders—"it's the fortune of war," he concluded philosophically. "Come on, those chaps have finished the Rumpler! If we can once get her in the air, we will at least give them a run for their money."

Together they strolled casually towards the big green machine.

"Get to the prop, Tony," said Rex tersely. "If she'll start first swing, we might get off before they can reach us, even if it means starting with a stone-cold engine." He leapt nimbly into the pilot's seat. "Suck in," he snapped, "and make it lively!"

He took a swift glance towards the tarmac, and his heart turned to stone. Two officers were walking quickly towards them. It was Von Rasberg and another officer whom he did not know, but obviously an officer of senior rank, by the servile way in which Von Rasberg was listening to him.

"Contact!" cried Tony desperately.

"Contact!"

There was a sharp report as the engine back-fired.

"Try her again, Tony!" called Rex, deadly calm.

There was a dull, swishing sound as the prop swung round, but it stopped again with a quivering jerk. There was no time for another attempt.

"What do you fellows think you are doing?" asked Von Rasberg, coming up.

"Oh, we were doing nothing, sir, so I thought I'd try this machine," said Rex evenly. "I've always wanted to fly a Rumpler," he added.

The other officer said something to Von Rasberg in an undertone which Rex could not catch, and then, aloud:

"Good! I am always pleased to see officers so keen on their work. Take it, by all means; but don't be long—no, not you," he added quickly, as Tony took a step towards the rear cockpit. "I do not think it is right for officers to carry passengers when trying a new machine. If there is an accident we lose two officers instead of one. Go across to my chauffeur and tell him to bring my car round—Colonel von Haritzmann's car."

Tony stiffened to rigid attention, saluted with a little

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bow in the German fashion, and departed in the direction of the hangars.

Rex watched him go with his brain whirling. Well, he decided, he'd started it, and now he would have to go on with it. He beckoned to a mechanic to swing the prop for him. At the third attempt the engine started, and he taxied slowly across the aerodrome into position for taking off. If only Tony was in the back seat now, he pondered sadly; but he wasn't, and there was an end to it. What rotten luck that the engine wouldn't start! How could he get him into the machine? That was the question. He took off, and circled the aerodrome to think things over. A thousand feet below, he could see Tony standing outside the officers' mess, and could imagine the wistful expression on his face. "Suppose I landed again," mused Rex. "I wonder if he could sprint out and jump aboard before they could stop him?" It might be done, but it was taking a terrible risk, he decided. Failure would inevitably mean disaster. There must be some other way. Yes—he had it! He banked steeply and swung round in the direction of Salsce Aerodrome, the headquarters of the 17th Jagdstaffel. He knew the place well by sight from the air, and, as far as he could remember, it was not more than ten or fifteen miles away.

Ten minutes later he made a good landing on the aerodrome of the German fighting squadron. He taxied close up to the hangars, and, leaving the engine ticking over, walked boldly to the small building at the end of the hangars which he took to be the squadron office. He rapped on the door, and in reply to the curt "Enter!" opened it and stepped across the threshold.

"Leutnant von Grossman, sir!" he said smartly, giving the first name that came into his head.

The officer at the desk eyed him coldly.

"Well, what is it?" he asked shortly.

"I am on a test flight, sir, but I have lost my bearings. I have landed to ask where I am."

"Salsce!" snapped the other. "Go to the map-room, and you will see where you are—through there." He nodded towards a corridor, and then went on with his work without another glance.

Rex departed in the direction indicated, but instead of entering the map-room he made his way to the ante-room adjoining the officers' mess. As he hoped, the room was nearly empty, for he knew that at that time of day most of the pilots would be in the air. Two or three officers were sitting reading near the fire, but they took no notice of him.

"Is there a telephone handy?" Rex asked the nearest.

"In there." The officer pointed to a door with the stem of his pipe. Rex opened it, and found himself inside a small cabinet, and breathed a deep sigh of relief as he picked up the instrument.

"I want the officers' mess—Varne, please—and quickly!" he told the operator.

"Hallo! Is that Varne?" he asked a moment later, as a voice came over the line. "Good! I am speaking for the officer commanding 97th Army Corps Squadron. I wish to speak to Leutnant Koepfer. Yes, yes, he may be on the tarmac—find him at once, please!" For two minutes he waited, burning with impatience, before Tony's answering voice came over the wire. "Tony," he said quickly, "listen! Get behind the hangars and try to sneak off. Make for that big field about a mile north-east of the aerodrome—the one I pointed out to you the other day as a good emergency landing ground. I shall be there in fifteen minutes with the machine, and I shall wait until you come. Don't hurry if it means taking a risk, but get there as soon as you can. Got that? Good-bye!" He hung up the receiver, pulled himself together before re-entering the room, and then strolled out as unconcerned as possible. It was not until he was once more back in the cockpit of the Rumpler that he realised how great had been the strain of the last few minutes. He was as cold as ice, and the hand that held the joystick was trembling slightly in spite of his efforts to steady it. He took a deep breath, taxied out, and took off. "The luck's in," he told himself jubilantly, as he headed for the rendezvous. "If only Tony can get away—and that should not be very difficult—the rest will be easy."

Reaching the field, he circled for a moment to pick out the best place on which to land, and then glided slowly down. His wheels touched the soft turf, and without waiting for the machine to finish her run, he taxied round into position facing the wind for the take-off. Standing up in the cockpit, he looked anxiously around. Not a soul was in sight. He did not dare to switch the engine off, but left it ticking over, praying fervently that no one would hear it and come to investigate. The minutes passed on leaden wings, and the strain of waiting became almost unbearable. He was about to get out and walk up and down to relieve

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the tedium, when there was a quick rustle in the hedge behind him and Tony burst through.

"Get in!" snapped Rex, and before Tony was properly in his seat he was racing, tail-up, across the field. As he zoomed steeply over the trees at the end a cheer of joy and relief broke from his lips. Tony leaned over and patted him on the shoulder.

"Pretty good!" he yelled. "We've done it!" Turning, he waved a mocking farewell to the aerodrome, over which they were now passing, but the next instant his smile of victory was replaced with an expression of utter horror. A new note had crept into the engine, and it began to misfire badly. Rex needed no telling what had happened—they had run out of petrol! He had taken the Rumpler before the tanks were refuelled. He made a gesture of utter despair and began to glide down towards the aerodrome, the only possible landing ground within reach. A moment later their wheels touched, and the Rumpler ran slowly to a standstill in front of the hangars.

"What luck!" ground out Rex between set teeth. "What filthy, abominable luck! Look who's waiting for us! Well, the worst they can do is to shoot us!"

Tony, following Rex's nod, looked. Standing on the tarmac not twenty yards away was Colonel von Hartsmann. Beside him, wearing an expression that boded no good for them, was Hauptmann von Rasberg. Behind them, a little distance away, smiling grimly, stood Captain Fairfax.

Now, there comes a time in the most adverse circumstances when things look so bad that they could not possibly be worse, and the reaction often takes a curious form of relief. And so it was with Rex at that moment. At the sight of the group standing in the tarmac, following the mental and physical strain of the last few hours, all trace of nervousness and anxiety left him. The worst had happened, so there was no need to worry about it any more. A broad grin spread over his face.

"Well," he said loudly, "here we are!" and hummed a popular tune as he climbed stiffly from the cockpit.

The colonel took a pace or two nearer, and his eyes narrowed ominously.

"Did I tell you you were not to take a passenger in that machine?" he inquired in a voice which cut the air like a whip lash.

"Yes, sir; but—"

"But! You dare to answer me back!" stormed the irate officer. "Don't you understand orders?"

Rex closed his teeth like a trap.

"Did I say you were not to take a passenger?" snarled the colonel, raising his arm as if to strike him in his rage.

"Yes, sir."

The colonel was quite right. He had disobeyed orders, and even if he had been what he pretended to be—that is, a German officer—he would deserve punishment.

"I ought to put you both under close arrest!" snapped the colonel harshly. And then, with a sudden change of tone: "Well, how did you like the machine?"

"A nice, comfortable machine to fly, sir, thanks," replied Rex evenly.

"You think so? Good! Have you ever done any night flying?"

"Certainly, sir," answered Rex at once.

The colonel nodded slowly, and a curious smile spread over his face.

"Report to me by yourself in the squadron office in five minutes," he said. "I shall not need you," he added, with a curt nod to Tony; and then, swinging round on his heel, he strode away, closely followed by Hauptmann von Rasberg. Some mechanics wheeled the Rumpler into a hangar, and Rex and Tony were left on the tarmac with Fairfax. Nobody spoke, but the tension in the air could almost have been cut with a knife.

"Come on, Tony!" said Rex at last, turning in the direction of the mess.

For a moment Fairfax looked as if he was going to say something, but he changed his mind and they passed without a word.

"Stick around, Tony," said Rex in a low tone, as they reached the squadron office. "I don't suppose I shall be many minutes." And, turning, he rapped sharply on the door.

"Come in!" snapped a voice.

Rex entered, and raised his eyes to look at the speaker, but they stopped midway as they fell on something that caused an icy hand to clutch his heart. For a moment he could only stand and stare. Just what he expected to find in the room he did not know, for he had had little time to wonder at the colonel's demand; but he certainly did not expect to see the thing at which he now stared as if fascinated.

On the table, immediately in front of him, lay a R.F.C.



Rex applied his eye to the window. Three men were seated round a table. They appeared to be typical specimens of the French peasant class, but he caught his breath as he recognised one of them. It was Hauptmann von Rasberg!

uniform, complete with Sam Browne belt. At that instant it never occurred to Rex that the uniform was anything but his own, which the enemy, probably Fairfax, had fetched from Neuville, where he had left it. "This is their way of telling me that the game is up," he thought grimly. Fairfax's idea of a joke! Indeed, as the first numbing shock wore off, Rex looked up, expecting to see Fairfax in the room. But he was not; only the colonel and Von Rasberg were there.

"Come along—come along!" said the colonel irritably. "I'm not going to eat you!" And at the sound of the colonel's voice it dawned upon Rex that he might have been mistaken about the uniform. With a mighty effort of will, he pulled himself together and listened to what the colonel was saying. He had expected that at least he was in for a severe ticking off and perhaps punishment, but here was the colonel actually congratulating him on the way he had landed the Rumpier when the engine cut out.

"Yes," continued the colonel, "it was an excellent effort. Many a man would have lost his head—and I need men who can keep their heads in an emergency," he added significantly. "But let me come to the point. As you know, I am in command of the 3rd Army Intelligence Section."

Rex didn't know, but he did not say so.

"Leutnant von Henkel, who usually carries out my most important work for me, has been forced to report sick this afternoon with influenza, and I am in need of a pilot to undertake a very important secret mission."

Rex listened like a man in a trance, and as the fact was slowly forced upon him that one of the heads of the German Intelligence Corps was asking him to undertake a special mission, he nearly laughed. It was too preposterous. Again he realised how true were Major Trevor's words when he had said, "At this game anything can happen." But the colonel was speaking again.

"You tell me you have done some night-flying, and Hauptmann von Rasberg tells me you know the area behind the Allied lines along this sector of the Front very well."

"Fairly well, sir," admitted Rex, wondering what the colonel would say if he knew just how well he did know it.

"Then your task should be quite simple," declared the colonel. "Do you by any chance speak English?"

"I know a few words of the language," admitted Rex again, restraining an almost overpowering impulse to laugh aloud.

"Very good. It may help you in an emergency. Now, this is what I want you to do," continued the colonel. "You will take off as soon as it is dark and fly a passenger, whom you will find waiting by the machine, to this spot." He indicated a place on a greatly enlarged photograph

which lay on the table before him, and Rex bent over to see more clearly. "Here is the main Amiens Road," continued the colonel, "and here is the Chateau Neuf. The lake in the grounds forms quite a good landmark and can be seen quite clearly even at night. You will land here." He pointed to a long, open space at the back of the building with the point of his pencil. "My messenger will leave you, and you will wait until he returns. All you then have to do is to bring him back here. Have I made myself quite clear?"

"Perfectly, sir," answered Rex, once more master of himself.

"One more thing," said the colonel. "This uniform." He nodded towards the clothes on the table. "You had better wear these. It is purely a precautionary measure which may help you in the event of a forced landing. That uniform will attract less attention than the one you are at present wearing."

The colonel smiled at his own humour, and Rex laughed outright.

"That's all," said the colonel briskly. "Bring back my passenger safely and this afternoon's episode will be forgotten."

Rex saluted, left the room, and hurried to the tarmac, where he found Tony seated on a chock, watching a formation of German raiders that were just landing. Seeing Rex coming towards him, he rose to his feet and strolled to meet him.

"Well, what was it all about?" he asked breathlessly.

"If I gave you a hundred million guesses you wouldn't guess right," said Rex, "and you probably will not believe me when I tell you. I can't believe it myself yet. Catch hold of yourself and listen to this. As soon as it is dark, I am flying the Rumpier to a spot behind the British lines on a secret mission."

Tony's jaw sagged foolishly.

"A secret mission?" he echoed stupidly.

"That's what I said," repeated Rex tersely. "I know it sounds silly, but it's a fact. This isn't a war we've got mixed up in, but a fairy tale. Nothing will ever surprise me again as long as I live!" But he spoke too soon, for the day of shocks and surprises was not yet over.

Shocks and Revelations!

NIGHTFALL found Rex, with his flying coat concealing the British uniform, in earnest conversation with Tony while awaiting the arrival of his passenger.

"My only regret is that I cannot get you in the machine," said Rex.

somehow. Now we know the Chateau Neuf is the other end of the chain, the headquarters of the Germans who are working over our side of the line, we've got the whole thing taped. All we've got to do is to get back and put our cards on the table, but it can't be done; there is more behind all this than we know, and I've got a nasty feeling in the pit of my stomach that things are moving swiftly to a climax. We are being watched—I'm certain of that. Well, there is no going back now; we've got to play our cards to the bitter end.

"Whatever happens I shall come back here for you, remember that. Keep handy; you never know when our chance might come to make a bolt for it. Things are quiet at the moment, and I feel that it would be senseless to rush into trouble by doing something silly. If we can slip away without stirring up trouble, so much the better; but I am absolutely certain that if you and I tried to get in this machine at this very moment, we should both be in the guard-room before we could say Jack Robinson. There is an atmosphere about this place now that I don't like, although on the surface everything is as nice as pie. Keep your eye on Fairfax. There he is now, standing by the end hangar, watching us. But I expect this is my man coming across. Good-bye, old lad!"

A swift handshake and they parted, Rex to the Rumpler, now ticking over idly outside its hangar, and Tony towards the mess.

Rex's passenger, muffled to the eyes in heavy flying kit, hurried to the Rumpler and took his place in the rear cockpit without a word, and his silence did not surprise Rex, who was beginning to understand the dire necessity for secrecy in these affairs. They take no chances, these chaps, and I don't wonder at it, he reflected, as he waved away the clocks, and without any further loss of time took off into the starlit sky.

For half an hour he flew on the course he had set, climbing steadily for height until the star shells of No Man's Land gleamed below, and then he throttled back and glided quietly over the darkened British reserve trenches and rest camps beyond. He had no difficulty in picking up the Amiens road, and he followed it until he reached the by-road up which the chateau was situated.

He had seen it many times before, and imagined it to be one of the many fine old houses that had been abandoned by their owners when the tide of war swept over them in 1914 and '15. Indeed, it had suffered badly, and as he glided low over it he noticed that a great part of it was in ruins. Not a light showed anywhere.

The field in which he had to land was none too large, and he breathed a sigh of relief when the machine ran to a standstill with very little room to spare. He switched off the engine and looked around to find that his passenger was already out of his seat.

"Wait," was the only word spoken by the man as he turned and hurried off into the darkness in the direction of the chateau.

After a few moments indecision, Rex decided that whatever the result might be, he must try to find out what was going on in the chateau; but he had not taken half a dozen paces when a figure loomed up in the darkness near at hand.

"It would be better to stay by the machine," said a voice, and there was a veiled threat in the ominous words.

"I was just off to see if I could get some help," replied Rex quickly. "This confounded engine cowl has worked loose, and I don't want it to tear off in the air and smash my top plane; give me a hand, will you?"

Rex climbed up into his seat and groped in a canvas pocket inside the cockpit, where he had discovered a few emergency tools, including a large heavy spanner. He returned to the figure standing by the nose of the machine.

"Can you feel a bolt under there?" he said, pointing to the underside of the engine cowl.

"Which one?" said the man, bending down.

"This one," said Rex, and brought the heavy spanner down with all his strength on the man's head.

There was no need to hurry, for the man lay as lifeless as a log; but Rex was taking no chances. Quickly unfastening his muffler, he lashed the man's arms firmly behind his back, and then, with the leather belt of his flying coat, he strapped his legs together. Finally he thrust his silk handkerchief into the unconscious man's mouth, and dragged him by the collar to the hedge.

He paused for a moment to listen, but all was quiet, so he strode off quickly towards the building that loomed whitely in the starlight near at hand. He reached some outbuildings, and again stopped to listen; he could faintly hear voices coming from the direction of the chateau, but the house was in darkness. Following the sound, he crept stealthily round a corner to the front. All the windows were shuttered in the usual French manner, but through one of the shutters which had sagged to one side gleamed a pale shaft of yellow light. By standing on tiptoe, Rex could just reach the window, and he applied his eye to the narrow gap.

Three men were seated round a table; they appeared to be typical specimens of the French peasant class, judging by the clothes they wore; but Rex caught his breath as his eye fell on the one farthest from him, and who was facing his way. There was no mistake. It was Hippocras von Rasberg!

(Rex has discovered the meeting place of the German spies—but he must get back to Vorne to collect Tony! There are amazing revelations and thrills in next week's grand instalment!)



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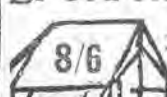
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